LUFTWAFFE COLOURS

CLASSIC COLOURS

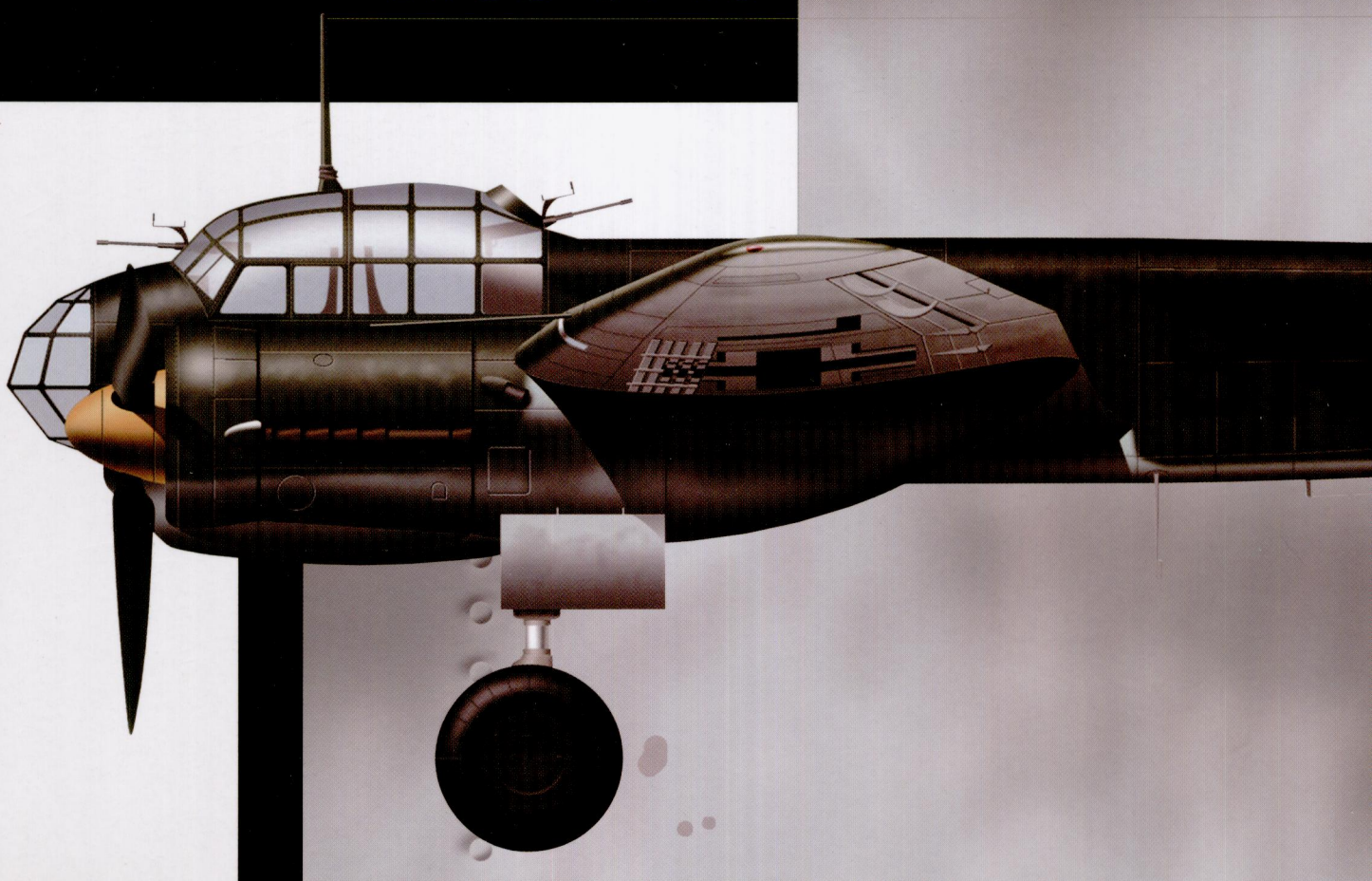
KAMPFFLIEGER

Volume One

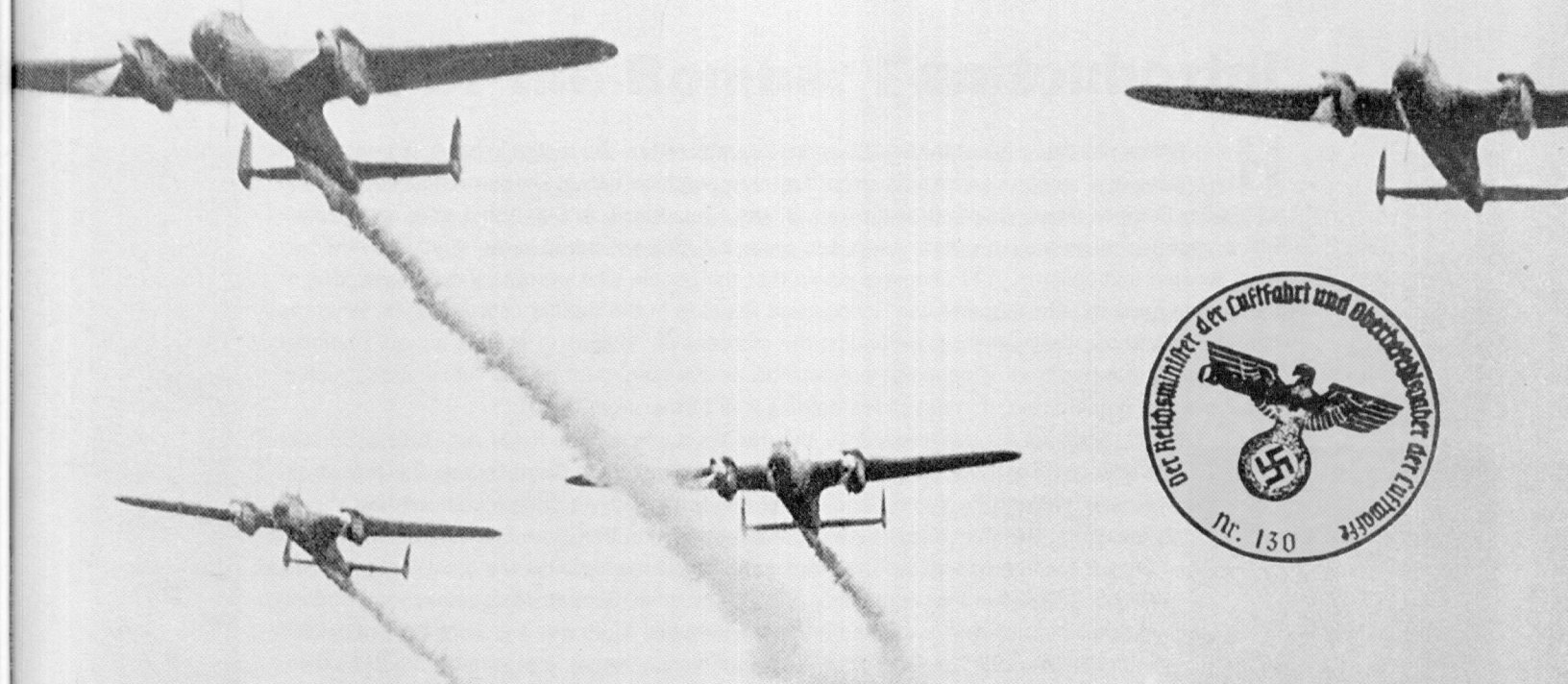
J Richard Smith
& Eddie J Creek

BOMBERS OF THE LUFTWAFFE

1933-1940



THE LUFTWAFFE BOMBER FORCE 1933-1945



"I have done my best, in the past few years, to make our Luftwaffe the largest and most powerful in the world. The creation of the Greater German Reich has been made possible largely by the strength and constant readiness of the Air Force. Born of the spirit of the German airman in the First World War, inspired by faith in our Führer and Commander-in-Chief - thus stands the Luftwaffe today, ready to carry out every command of the Führer with lightning speed and undreamed of might."

Göring.

Reichsmarschall

(August 1939)

Introduction

Horst Götz, a former pilot with KGr 100, once commented to the authors that "...bombing is a dirty business" confirming an opinion held by many wartime airmen, both on the Allied and the Axis side. Bomber crews, unlike fighter pilots, share a reluctance to talk about their experiences which, however much they may have wished to prevent it, often resulted in the deaths of innocent men, women and children. It is understandable that the people who were on the receiving end of the bombs grew to hate those whose actions had resulted in the deaths of loved ones. Whereas fighter pilots were usually seen as defending the innocent as 'knights in shining armour', bomber crews were often depicted by opposing propaganda as evil men, bent on the ruthless destruction of people and property but, in most cases nothing was further from the truth.

ABOVE: "Bombing is a dirty business...": Oblt. Horst Götz of KGr 100 was a very experienced bomber pilot who flew more than 40 missions in the Battle of Britain. He continued to fly throughout the war ending up as the Staffelkapitän of 1./Versuchsverband OKL flying reconnaissance missions in the Ar 234 jet aircraft.

ABOVE: Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, head of RAF Bomber Command, never lost his conviction that area bombing alone could bring the war to an end and pursued this theory to the utmost with devastating raids on Köln, Hamburg, Berlin and many other German cities.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command. For much of the war, the bombing of targets in Germany was the only way of striking back at the enemy, and as the war continued, Air Chief Marshal Arthur Harris, known as 'Bomber' Harris, never lost his conviction that area bombing by itself could bring the war to an end. He therefore pursued this theory to the utmost with devastating raids on Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin and many other German cities. However, although Harris's policies were endorsed by the War Cabinet, there was a growing body of opinion in the UK that the bombing of civilians was morally wrong, and as early as 1943 there were signs of public and political distaste. In 1945, the destruction of Dresden in particular brought such a major wave of anger and dismay that even Churchill tried to distance himself from this raid and the rising controversy surrounding area bombing.

After the war, the part that British bombers had played in winning victory was one that many politicians and civilians preferred to forget, and as stated above, the laurels and romantic adulation were reserved for Fighter Command, the defenders. Thus Harris was the only senior British commander not to receive a peerage after the war, and no medal was ever struck for the men of Bomber Command. If this is how the victor treated its own bomber crews, it is little wonder that enemy bomber crews were despised.

Yet contrary to the perceived public opinion, almost all bomber men interviewed by the authors were decent men who had been ordered to do a job which they then attempted to carry out without malice or hatred. The only thing that may have softened the blow was a feeling of collective, as opposed to personal responsibility, it often being impossible to determine exactly what damage or deaths a particular crew's bombs had caused.

This dilemma remains true today as has been shown by the British and American bombing of Iraq. Even with the precision weapons of today, it is still not possible to avoid civilian deaths or casualties. This series tells the story of the *Luftwaffe* Bomber Force, ending in 1945 but is dedicated to all the crews, of whatever nation, who had and still have to fly such missions whether during the two great wars, in Korea, or in the Middle East. It was their duty, but rarely a happy one.

RIGHT: The destruction caused by mass area bombing is clearly evident in this aerial photograph of Köln taken in 1945.

Birth of the Bomber Force

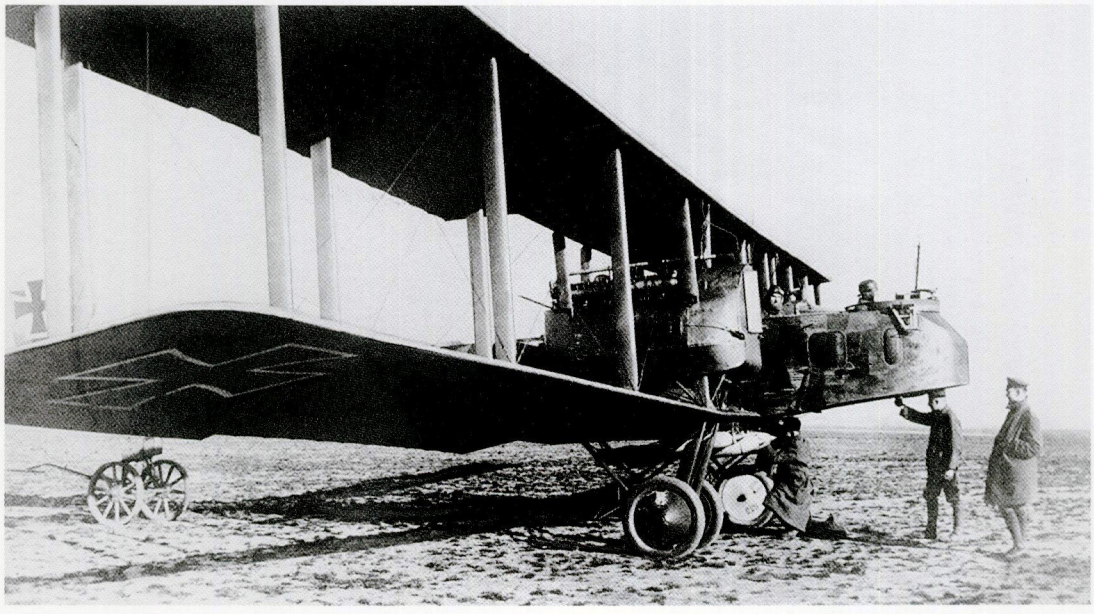
'September 24th. ...Then [went with] Edward to theatre and almost immediately lights went out and a [bombing] raid – Alice sat in Hall and watched for Edward, feared he would be quite exhausted & at last was able to send him some sandwiches – he returned & we dined – no performance could take place. Raid over. Edward returned. Fearful noise more or less all night'

Extract from Alice Elgar's Diary,
(The wife of the composer Edward Elgar)
24 September 1917

It is not perhaps generally realised that the German Air Service carried out regular bombing raids on London and the British south coast during the First World War. Initially these raids were mounted using Zeppelin airships, but the advance in fighter aircraft rendered their continuing employment virtually impossible. Germany then began to use bomber aeroplanes to undertake the raids, perhaps the most famous of which were the Gotha G IV and G V. The name 'Gotha' became (inaccurately) applied to all German heavy bombers of the period and was often mentioned in Britain only with apprehension.

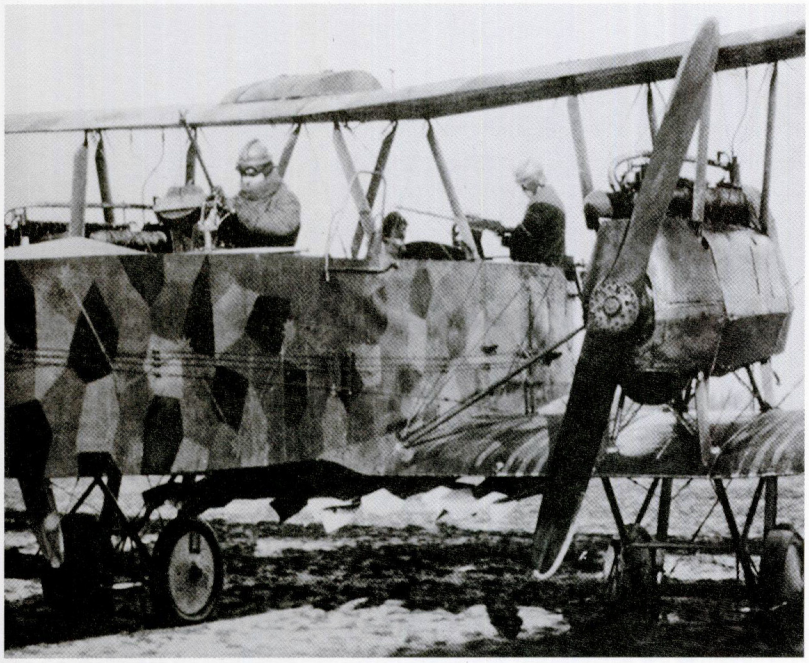
One of the first German strategic bomber units to be formed was given the rather delightful cover name of the *Brieftauben Abteilung Ostende* No.1 (Ostend Carrier Pigeons), becoming *Kampfgeschwader* 1 (Bomber Wing 1) on 1 January 1916. This unit carried out a few raids on British targets, with three flights being detached to form a second unit known as *Kampfgeschwader* 3. With the departure of KG 1 for Bulgaria during the summer of 1916, KG 3, the strength of which was

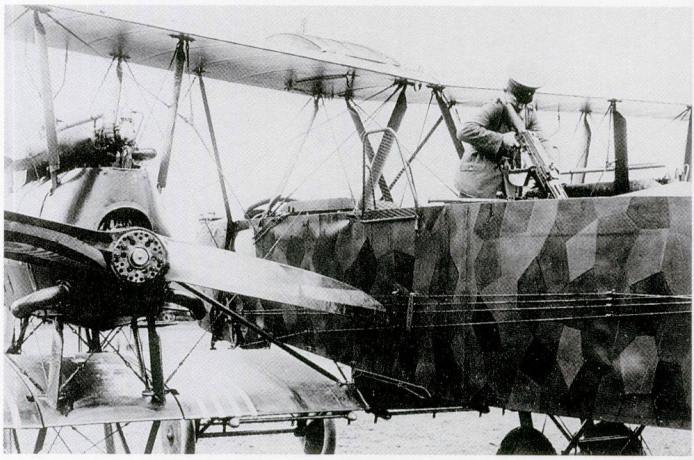
BELOW: The first successful raid on England by Kampfgeschwader 3 was carried out on 13 July 1917 by a mixed force of Gotha G Vs and Friedrichshafen G IIIs. The former type, seen here, was powered by two 260 hp Mercedes water cooled in-line engines and usually carried six 50 kg bombs for raids on Britain.



LEFT: The Gotha G V, together with the Gotha G IV and Friedrichshafen G III formed the main equipment of the German strategic bombing force during the First World War. It replaced the Zeppelin airships which had previously been used for such duties, but which had become vulnerable to enemy fighter action.

RIGHT AND BELOW: Three views of the Gotha G V showing the distinctive lozenge-type camouflage adopted by many German aircraft during the First World War. The aircraft carried a crew of three: pilot, navigator/front gunner and rear gunner, the latter pair each provided with a Parabellum machine-gun. A distinctive feature of the Gotha G IV and G V was that the rear gun could be fired backwards and downwards through a plywood lined tunnel. This firing arrangement often caught the less wary British fighter pilots as they climbed to intercept the bomber.





eventually expanded to six *Staffeln* all based at Ghent in Belgium, took over the task of bombing attacks on Britain. The unit's first successful raid on England was carried out on 13 July 1917 by a mixed force of Gotha G Vs and Friedrichshafen G IIIs. At the end of the year KG 3 and the other bombing wings were re-organised into *Bombengeschwader* (BG) 3 which had six *Staffeln* numbered 13 to 18. The daylight raids over England between 25 May to 22 August 1917 were very successful, not so much in damage caused, but in tying down British fighters urgently needed elsewhere, and having a deleterious effect on civilian morale. The improvement in these defences did, however, force a switch to night attacks from 3 September 1917, with the raids finally ending in May 1918.

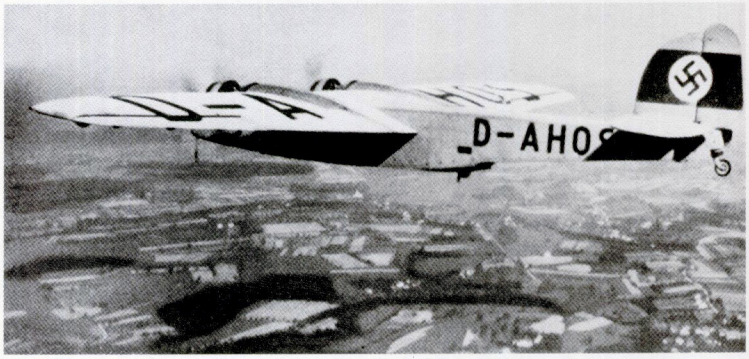
Following the end of the First World War on 11 November 1918, the victorious Allies demanded that Germany surrender half its weapons and all its aircraft. Under Clause IV of the Armistice agreement, the German Government had to "surrender in good condition 1,700 fighting and bombing aeroplanes – in the first place all aircraft of the Fokker D.VII type and all night-bombing aeroplanes." Even at this time, the importance of the bomber had already been acknowledged.

Although some clandestine military aviation activities took place inside and outside Germany during the 1920s, it was not until the spring of 1930 that proposals were put forward for the re-establishment of a German Air Arm. Much discussion, some of it quite antagonistic, took place during the year that followed, but by July a plan was agreed to establish an air force of 22 *Staffeln* by 1936. At this time the development of a strategic bomber force to disrupt any possible future enemy's infrastructure was considered to be most important, and a specification was issued for the development of a four-engined bomber, the Dornier P. Despite this there was a feeling that twin-engined bombers would be cheaper and easier to maintain. This argument was to continue during the years that followed.

LEFT: Following a return Deutsche Lufthansa postal flight between Berlin and Bagdad during the 1920s, the pilot Flugkapitän Klaus (on the *left*) and Oberst. Dr. Robert Knauss pose in front of the Junkers aircraft which made the flight. Dr. Knauss later wrote a major study analysing the strategic concept of Germany's air force when he proposed that any new creation should contain a decisive element of some 400 long-range four-engined 'strategic' bombers.

The first new provisional German bomber unit to be formed was *Bombengeschwader* 1 which was established on 1 January 1934 at Berlin-Templehof under the command of *Oberst* Dr. Robert Knauss. Six months later the unit was divided into *Behelfskampfgeschwader* (Provisional Bomber Wing) 172 at Berlin-Tutow and *Behelfskampfgeschwader* 274 at Fassberg. Both were equipped with ex-Lufthansa Ju 52/3m airliners which had undergone a simple conversion to the bomber role. Known as the Ju 52/3m g3e, these conversions were provided with an open dorsal gun position in which was mounted a single 7.9 mm MG 15 machine gun with a precariously situated semi-retractable 'dustbin' beneath the centre of the fuselage housing a similar weapon. Two internal bomb bays were added, one forward and one aft of the ventral gun position, each capable of accommodating ten 110 lb SC 50 or two 550 lb SC 250 bombs mounted vertically. Powered by 750 hp BMW 132 A-3 engines, the type had a maximum speed of 275 km/h (170 mph). The *Behelfskampfgeschwader* later formed the basis of the *Luftwaffe's* transport force, known as *Kampfgeschwader zur besonderen Verwendung* or Bomber wings on Special Operations. These units retained their Ju 52/3ms but could, in an emergency, still double as bombers. In practice this rarely happened and, in May 1943, the designation Transport *Geschwader* or *Gruppe* was adopted.

The beginning of the operational *Luftwaffe* bomber force began on 20 April 1934 with the establishment of a unit with the cover name *Hanseatische Fliegerschule e.V.* (Hanseatic Flying School e.V.) at Fassberg, south of Hamburg, in north-west Germany. By 1 July the unit had been expanded to a strength of a *Stabsstaffel* and three *Staffeln*, initial equipment comprising 24 Ju 52/3ms and three Do 11 Cs. A month later a second operational bomber unit was established at Tutow near Greifswald in Pommerania under the verbose cover designation *Funkpeil-Versuchsinstitut des Reichsverbandes der elektrotechnische Industrie* (Radio Direction Finding Test Institute of the Electro Technical Industry). It too was equipped with converted Ju 52/3m transport aircraft.



ABOVE: The Do 11 was the first European bomber to be fitted with a retractable undercarriage but because of its unreliability relatively few were delivered to the Luftwaffe before the type was replaced by the similar Do 23 with conventional fixed gear and different engines. The Do 11 D seen here with the civil registration D-AHOS, had a new shorter span wing with redesigned wingtips. It was delivered in small numbers to I./KG 154 and I./KG 553 before it was replaced by the Do 23.

However, the Do 11, a purpose-built bomber, was now beginning to enter service with the *Luftwaffe*. This had been developed by the Dornier company from the previously mentioned Do P. It was an angular shoulder-wing monoplane powered by two 650 hp Siemens Sh 22 B-2 radials and was the first European bomber to feature a retractable undercarriage. The first production model, the Do 11 C, carried 1,000 kg (2,200 lbs) of bombs mounted vertically in internal cells and a defensive armament of three MG 15 machine guns, one in the nose and one in the dorsal and ventral positions. Service use was to show that the aircraft suffered from many problems, not least of which was a tendency for it to suffer from severe vibration which often led to structural failure. Dubbed 'the Flying Coffin' by its crews, it was soon replaced on the production line by a development, the Do 23 which was considerably strengthened, fitted with a fixed undercarriage and powered by two 750 hp BMW VI engines.

The existence of the *Luftwaffe* was finally revealed to the world on 1 March 1935, and a month later six Regional Air Commands or *Luftkreiskommando* were created. These *Luftkreis*, to which 15 *Luftamter*, or Air Offices, were subordinated, were territorial areas of command. The six Regional Air Commands and their headquarters and commanders were:

Luftkreiskommando I	Königsberg	*Gen.Major* Karl-Friedrich Schweickhardt
Luftkreiskommando II	Berlin	*Gen.Lt.* Leonhard Kaupisch
Luftkreiskommando III	Dresden	*Gen.Lt.* Edmund Wochenfeld
Luftkreiskommando IV	Münster	*Gen.Lt.* Hans Halm
Luftkreiskommando V	München	*Gen.Lt.* Karl Eberth
Luftkreiskommando VI	Kiel	*Konteradmiral* Konrad Zander

At the same time, the two clandestine bomber *Gruppen* received new designations, the *Fliegergruppe* at Fassberg becoming I./KG 154 and the *Fliegergruppe* at Tutow I./KG 252. In this three-digit designation, *Kampfgeschwader* 154, for example, used the standard nomenclature of the time. The first digit, '1', represented the first *Luftwaffe* bomber unit to be formed, the second digit signified the type of unit, in this case '5' for a bomber unit, and the third digit, '4', being the number of the *Luftkreis*.

Soon afterwards, on 3 April 1935, I./KG 154 was given the name *Geschwader* 'Boelcke' in remembrance of the famous World War One fighter pilot, Oswald Boelcke, a similar honour having been bestowed on the *Luftwaffe's* first fighter and dive-bomber units, I./JG 132 and I./St.G 162, which became respectively, *Geschwader* 'Richthofen' and *Geschwader* 'Immelmann', again after two famous fighter pilots from the previous conflict.

An idea of how recruits for the *Luftwaffe* were obtained at this time was given by Wolfgang Schauer who had originally joined the Nazi Party as a political officer:

"Incorporated into the *Luftwaffe* were some of the very units I had helped to organise from the SA brownshirts who then simply transferred into the *Luftwaffe* and took on fresh uniforms. It was all very exciting and quite glamorous and I applied to join at once. My request was granted as my usefulness as a political officer had ceased. I now felt I had the chance to become a flyer in the real sense of the word and take up an air force career. With my political background there was no problem and I was entered into the lists as a regular officer of proven worth. It was then up to me to prove myself, however, for although I had learned to fly, I was still very much a novice and not sure of which branch of the service to pursue."

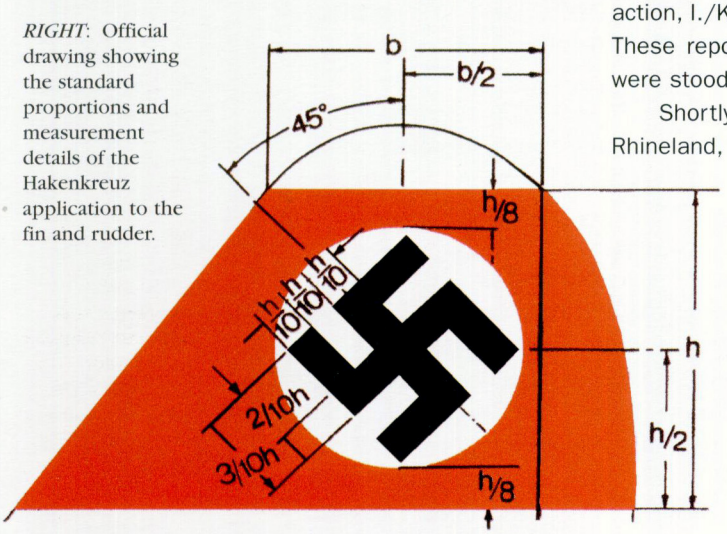
Rapid expansion of the *Luftwaffe* meant that by 1 October 1935 a total of 13 bomber *Staffeln* had been formed. These were as follows:

I./KG 154	Fassberg	Ju 52 and Do 11	2 *Staffeln*	*Luftkreis* IV
I./KG 252	Tutow	Ju 52 and Do 23	3 *Staffeln*	*Luftkreis* II
II./KG 352	Greifswald	Ju 52 and Do 23	2 *Staffeln*	*Luftkreis* II
I./KG 455	Giebelstadt	Ju 52	1 *Staffel*	*Luftkreis V*
I./KG 553	Merseburg	Ju 52 and Do 11	2 *Staffeln*	*Luftkreis* III
I./KG 653	Finsterwalde	Ju 52 and Do 23	2 *Staffeln*	*Luftkreis* III
I./KG 753	Gotha	Do 23	1 *Staffel*	*Luftkreis* III

A planning document (Rheinland Plan) of 1934 proposed the construction of a total of 4,021 aircraft for the new *Luftwaffe* by 30 September 1935 these including 150 Dornier 11s, 222 Dornier 13s (later replaced by the improved Do 23) and 450 Junkers 52/3ms. Also proposed were nine each of the new He 111 and Do 17 bombers, and three Ju 86s. Of these aircraft, the first 193 Ju 52s and 77 Do 11s were delivered to I./KG 154 and I./KG 252 plus the bomber schools at Lechfeld and Prenzlau.

Before October 1935, all these aircraft were painted overall in RLM 63, a pale grey-green, with civil registrations above and below the wings and on either side of the fuselage in black. A red band was painted on the port side of the fin and rudder, in the centre of which was positioned a black swastika on a white disc. Simple black, white and red bands representing the colours of the Weimar Republic were painted on the starboard side of the fin.

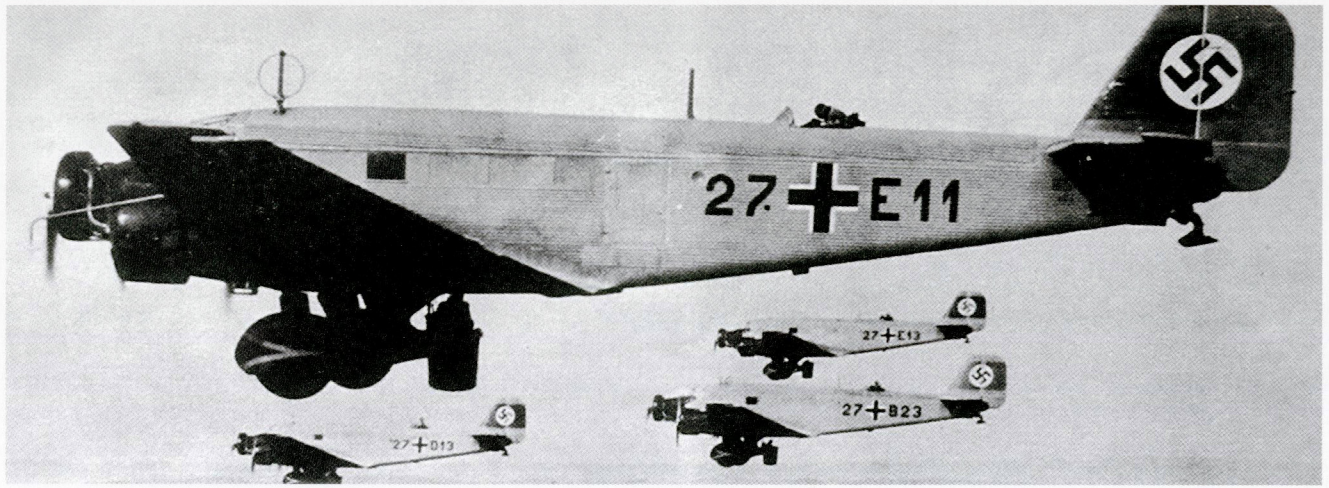
The first action in which Hitler's forces were involved was the re-occupation of the Rhineland which began on 7 March 1936 when three army battalions marched into the region. The only parts of the *Luftwaffe* to be directly involved were the fighter and dive-bomber *Gruppen*, III./JG 134 and I./St.G 165, but when the German authorities received reports of French bombers being readied to oppose the action, I./KG 753 was put on standby to bomb Paris with its Ju 52s. These reports soon proved exaggerated, however, and the crews were stood down.



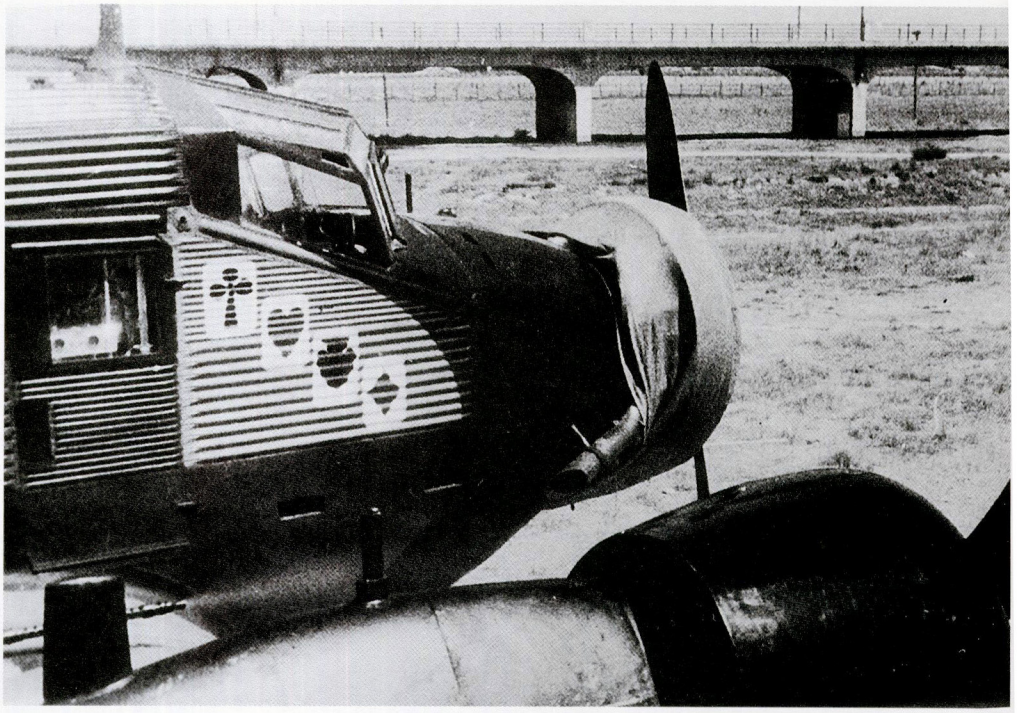
RIGHT: Official drawing showing the standard proportions and measurement details of the Hakenkreuz application to the fin and rudder.

Shortly after the completion of the re-occupation of the Rhineland, on 1 April 1936, *Luftwaffe* bomber units underwent a rapid expansion. Designations were subtly changed at this time, the first number in the designation now indicating when the unit was formed within the *Luftkries* rather than in the *Luftwaffe*. For example KG 252 was redesignated KG 152 and named 'Hindenburg' after the former German general and Chancellor, Paul von Hindenburg, who had died in 1934. At the same time a third *Gruppe* was added to the *Geschwader* at Greifswald, the unit moving with its Ju 52/3ms to Barth in June. Concurrently a second *Gruppe* was added to KG 154 at Wunstorf, while

RIGHT: KGzbV 1 was formed at Fürstenwalde on 1 October 1937 from IV./KG 152 under Major Dr. Max Ziervogel. The idea was that this unit should operate more in the transport role but could, in an emergency, double as a bomber Gruppe. This shows an aircraft from the 1.Staffel, 27+E11, in the foreground, with other aircraft, 27+D12, 27+C13 and 27+B23 in the background. On 26 August 1939, the Gruppe was redesignated I./KGzbV 1.



Junkers Ju 52/3m of 1./KGzbV 1, late 1937
All Ju 52/3m bomber/transport aircraft had pale grey finish very similar to that used by many Lufthansa aircraft. Civil registrations were replaced by Balkenkreuz (Greek cross) national insignia and five character unit identifications.



ABOVE: Ju 52/3m bombers of the fledgling Luftwaffe make a demonstration flight over the stadium at one of the Nürnberg Nazi Party rallies during the latter half of the 1930s.

BELOW: The Luftwaffe Chief of Staff, Oberst Walter Wever, was a great advocate of the long-range strategic bomber, but after he was killed in the crash of an He 70 on 3 June 1936, his successor, Albert Kesselring, placed preference on tactical bombers.

KG 553 and KG 653 were renamed I. and II./KG 153 respectively, a III.Gruppe being added to the new *Geschwader* at Altenburg in Thuringia. By this time, I. and II./KG 153 had re-equipped with the Do 11 and Do 23 respectively. Also on 1 April, KG 753 was redesignated I./KG 253, this unit now being in the process of exchanging its Ju 52/3ms for Do 23s. Simultaneously a second *Gruppe* was added to KG 253 at Erfurt and a third at Nordhausen, these two units also being equipped with the Ju 52/3m.

All pretence of hiding the existence of a new German Air Force had been abandoned, military aircraft now carrying black *Balkenkreuz* or crosses with a white outline on either side of the rear fuselage and on the upper and lower surfaces of each wing tip. A further change was the positioning of the *Hakenkreuz* (swastika) on both sides of the fin and rudder, again superimposed on a white disc over a bright red band. Simultaneously, a new system of markings was introduced for all active *Luftwaffe* units, although this was used only for a relatively short period by fighters. The new system comprised a five-digit code: two numbers, a letter and two numbers. As an example, the code '53+A13' could be broken down as follows:

5 – *Luftkreiskommando* V
3 – The third *Geschwader* formed within that *Luftkreis* (in this case KG 155)
A – The individual aircraft identification letter
1 – The I.*Gruppe*
3 – The 3.*Staffel*

ABOVE: When III./KG 153 was formed on 1 April 1936 at Altenburg it was equipped with the Ju 52/3m. Commanded by Obstlt. Robert Fuchs, the Stabskette (staff flight) had the four aces painted in diagonal formation on a red area beneath the cockpit. The aces of clubs, spades and hearts were carried respectively by the 7., 8. and 9.Staffeln of KG 153.

This marking was painted on both sides of the fuselage, and repeated above and below the wings. A list of known codes allocated to bomber units is given on page 21, and an illustration of how these markings were applied is given in the colour profile on page 7.

Following the death of the *Luftwaffe's* first Chief-of-Staff, Walther Wever, in the crash of his He 70 D-1 on 3 June 1936, KG 253 was named 'General Wever' in his honour I./KG 155, now equipped with the Do 23, was expanded by the establishment of II./KG 155 at Neukirchen and III./KG 155 at Schwäbisch Hall, both units equipped with the Ju 52/3m. Finally, I./KG 254 was established at Delmenhorst, also with Ju 52/3ms.

By this time it was becoming obvious that both the Ju 52/3m and Do 23 possessed a far from adequate performance when compared with the equipment of other air forces. This led to the development of the 'second generation' Ju 86 and He 111 which were designed to the same specification, and the lighter Do 17.

The Ju 86 was the first of these types to be completed. It was a low-wing monoplane with twin fins and rudders and a retractable undercarriage. It was designed from the

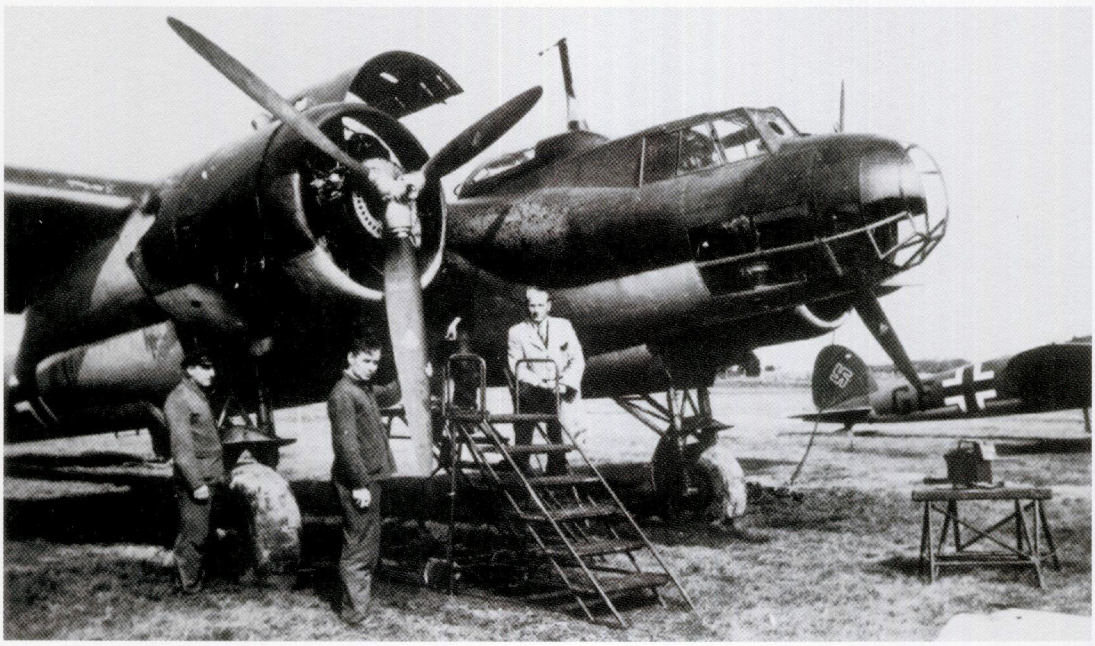
outset to take advantage of the new Jumo 205 six cylinder water-cooled diesel engines which had the quality of much lower fuel consumption when compared to that of petrol engines. The first production version, the Ju 86 A-1, was delivered to KG 152 during the late spring of 1936. It carried a crew of four, a defensive armament of three 7.9 mm MG 15 machine guns and a bomb load of eight 100 kg bombs suspended vertically in individual cells. Subsequent service use proved that the aircraft's longitudinal stability was far from adequate and the variant was replaced by the Ju 86 D-1 which introduced a considerably enlarged rear fuselage section.

Proving much more successful was the He 111, a twin-engine development of Heinkel's sleek He 70 airliner and reconnaissance aircraft. The prototype made its first flight on 24 February 1934, and was followed by ten He 111 A-0 pre-production aircraft powered by a pair of BMW VI engines. This variant was quickly replaced by the He 111 B, powered by much improved 950 hp Daimler–Benz DB 600 engines, and which carried a 1,500 kg (3,300 lb) bomb load and a defensive armament of three MG 15 machine guns. The type entered service with KG 154 Boelcke during the summer of 1937 and proved an instant success, one of the early pilots commenting.

"Then we were shown over a Heinkel 111 which was one of the latest *Luftwaffe* bombers, and it seemed a very big and reassuring type. We taxied round the field and took turns to handle the controls before we at last took off to make our first solo flights. I had no real problems and soon gained confidence, as the Heinkel was easy to fly and responded positively and quickly to the controls."

Unlike the two preceding aircraft, the Do 17 was conceived as a high speed mailplane for use on Deutsche Lufthansa's European express services. The prototype flew for the first time on 20 November 1934, being an attractive shoulder wing monoplane with a very slim fuselage. Powered by two 660 hp BMW VI engines, the aircraft had a remarkable performance but the extremely cramped accommodation for its six passengers resulted in it being rejected by Lufthansa. The aircraft was then 'discovered' by *Flugkapitän* Robert Untucht, liaison officer between the RLM and the airline, who suggested that it be converted for use as a high-speed bomber. This was to result in the appearance of the Do 17 E, a three-seat bomber powered by two 750 hp BMW VI engines which gave it a maximum speed of 355 km/h (220 mph). Bomb load was limited to 500 kg and defensive armament comprised two MG 15 machine guns. The first aircraft were delivered to I./KG 153 at Merseburg and I./KG 155 at Giebelstadt during the spring of 1937. The first loss of one of these aircraft was recorded on 30 April 1937 when W.Nr.877 of I./KG 155 crashed near Giebelstadt.

Although the Do 17 and He 111 went on to give yeoman service, the Ju 86 was never to prove popular with its crews. The chronic unreliability of its Diesel engines earned it the nickname of 'The Flying Coffee Grinder'. During April 1937, for example, the *Luftwaffe* lost 18 Ju 86s which crashed mainly due to lubrication problems which resulted in overheated engines, seized pistons and bearings, as well as broken gear wheels and connecting rods. Apart from the engines, the aircraft's flying characteristics were often viewed as unforgiving. As one pilot remembered:



LEFT: With a rather weather-beaten appearance, this Do 17 M carries the standard bomber camouflage of the early war years. The aircraft in the background is an He 70 which was used in small numbers by some German reconnaissance units.

"If you made a serious error, your chances of survival were extremely small. We had parachutes, but the problem was in even reaching the escape hatch. We gradually mastered these crates but soon afterwards thankfully said goodbye to them and went on to the newer and more agreeable Dornier 17. These were quite easy to fly and I enjoyed my first solos, although we had instructors with us in case of problems."

Problems with aircraft and the development of operational tactics led to the establishment of a special elite teaching and demonstration unit known as the *Lehrgeschwader* at Griefswald on 1 October 1936. Initially this comprised merely a *Geschwader Stab* to which II./KG 152, I./St.G 162 and 1.(F)/*Aufkl.*Gr 122 were subordinated. On 1 April 1937 three *Gruppen* were established:

II.(*schwere Jagd*)/LG	formed from III./JG 134 at Tutow
III.(*Kampf*)/LG	formed from II./KG 152 at Greifswald
IV.(*Stuka*)/LG	formed from I./St.G 162 at Schwerin

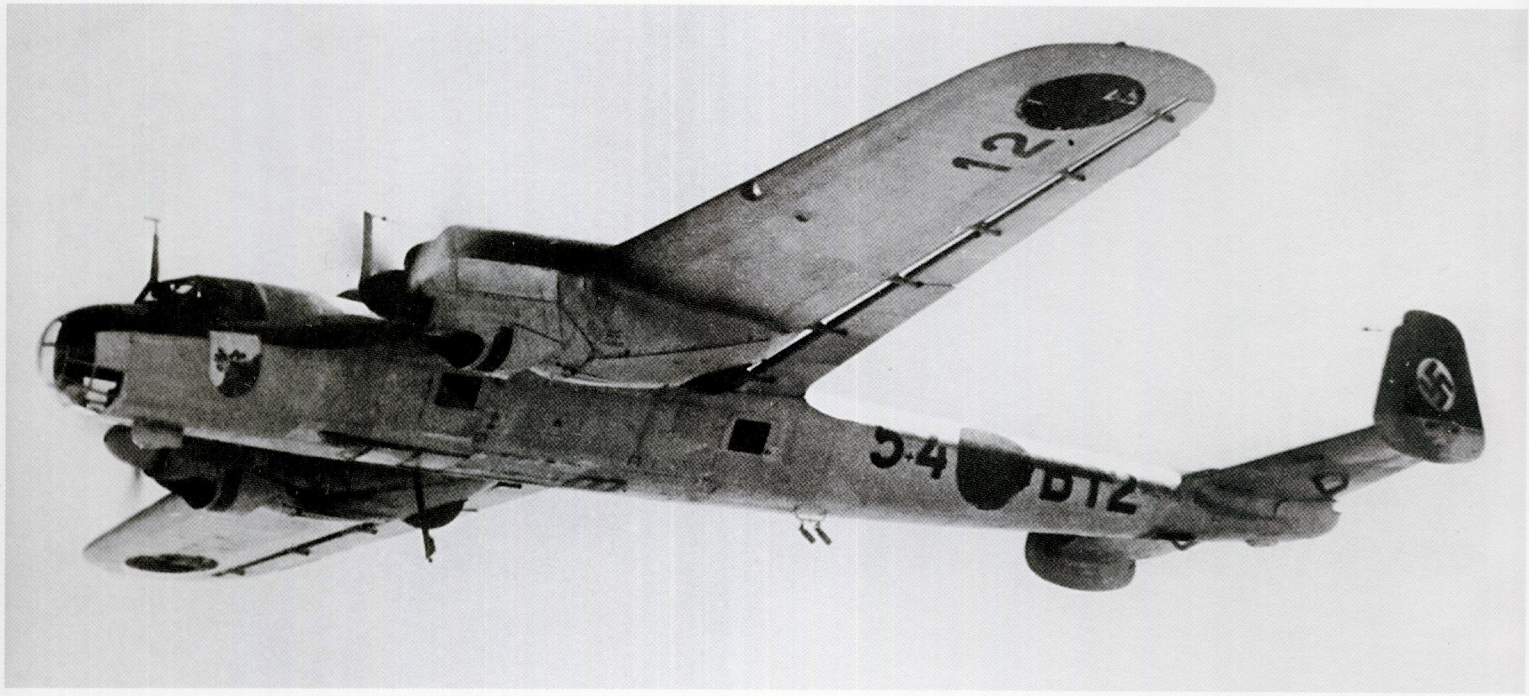
Previously, in February 1937 the II./KG 152 had received nine Do 17 Es and nine He 111 Bs, but bombing trials with these aircraft showed that only two per cent of their bombs could be placed within circle of 200 m (660 ft) diameter from 4,000 m (13,000 ft). These disappointing results did much to advance the development of the dive-bomber within the *Luftwaffe*.

The switch to the development of dive-bombers was a complete change of policy from that of Walther Wever whose death has been mentioned earlier. This far-sighted officer had proposed the development of a four-engined strategic bomber in 1934 which had resulted in the appearance of the Dornier Do 19 and Junkers Ju 89. Both designs, however, proved to be underpowered, and by the spring of 1936, Wever himself had lost faith in them, but this merely led him to issue a second specification for the so-called 'Bomber A'. His untimely death resulted in the downgrading of this project and Germany was never to produce a really effective strategic bomber.

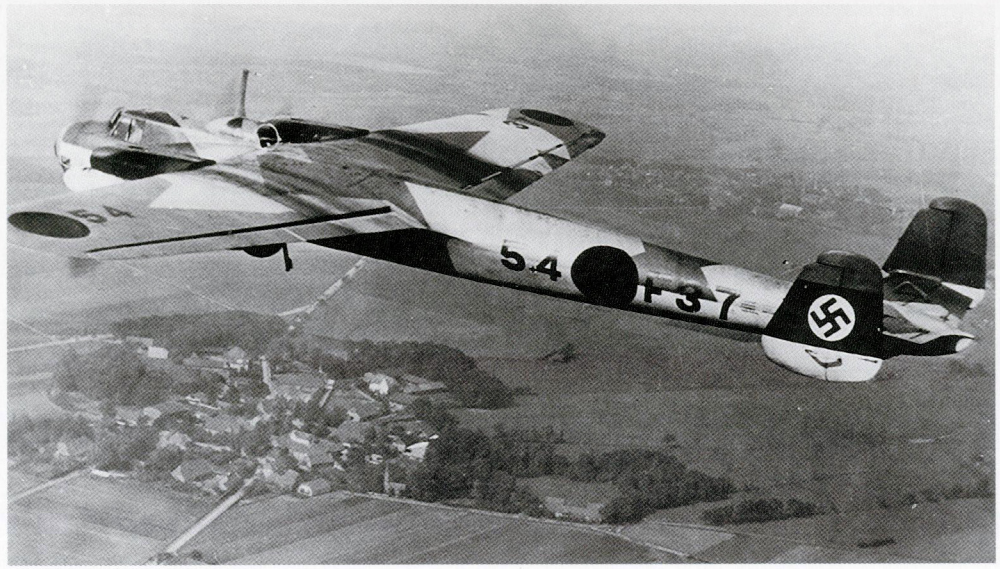
By early 1936, the overall pale grey-green colouring adopted by early *Luftwaffe* aircraft was replaced by a new four-colour camouflage scheme for all bombers and dive-bombers. This took the form of a complex splinter pattern using dark brown RLM 61, medium green 62 and pale grey 63 for all upper and side surfaces with pale blue 65 on all lower surfaces. This camouflage scheme seems to have appeared first with the introduction of the Ju 86 A during the early spring of 1936, and was later applied to the He 111s and Do 17s as they entered service. National insignia and unit markings remained as described earlier.

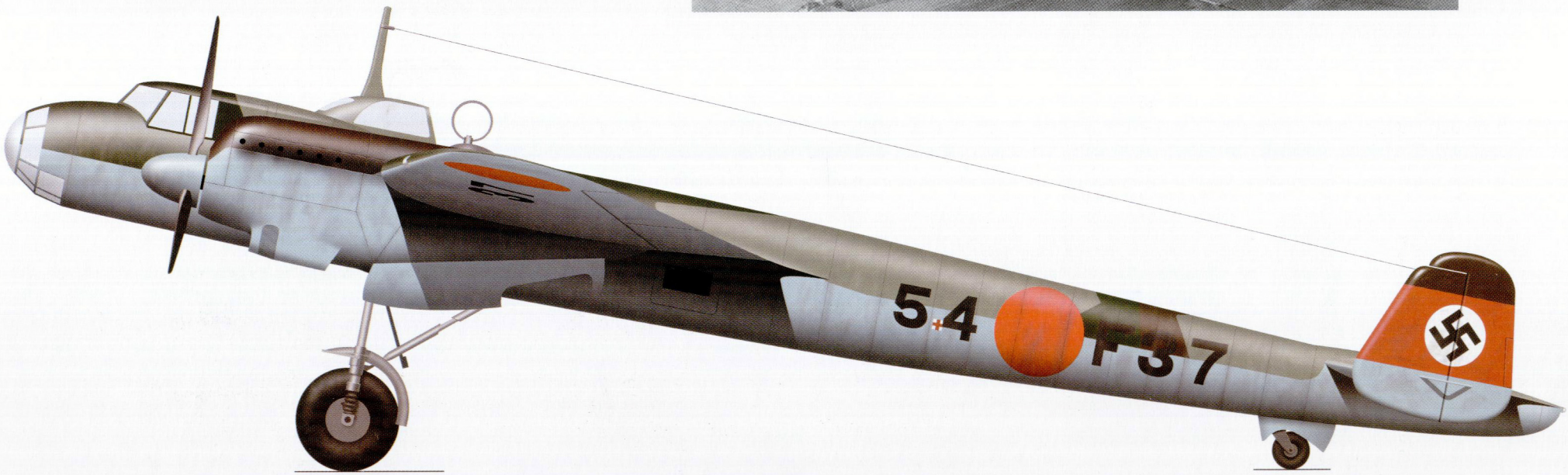
On 1 March 1937 the *Luftwaffe* bomber force was virtually doubled by means of splitting existing units into two in the so-called 'mother and daughter' process and equipping them with the new aircraft that were now coming off the assembly lines. An example of this is given on page 22.

BELOW: This Do 17 E-1 of 2./KG 255, 54+B12, shows to advantage the placement of the early type of Luftwaffe code system. The first two numbers of the code are painted forward of the fuselage national insignia (which have been temporarily replaced by red disks for manoeuvres held in 1937) with the remainder of the code aft. These first two numbers were repeated under the starboard wing, inboard of the red disk, with the individual letter painted beneath the fuselage centre section. The last two letters were painted beneath the port wing.



RIGHT: A Do 17 E-1 of 7./KG 255, the Alpen Geschwader, in flight over Bavaria. The aircraft carries the three-colour (brown, green and grey) uppersurface camouflage scheme with the original type of Hakenkreuz (swastika) painted on the outer surfaces of the fin and rudder over a red band. For the autumn manoeuvres of 1937, the Balkenkreuz national insignia have been replaced by red discs, these indicating the 'red force'. The unit code, 54+F37, was painted black.



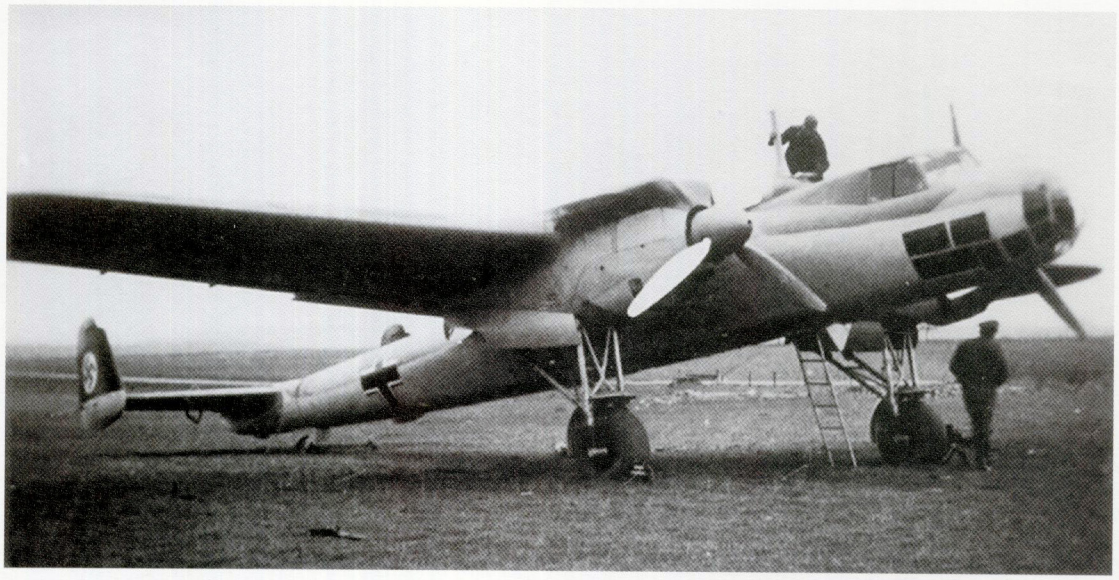


Dornier Do 17 E-1 of 7./KG 255 'Alpen', autumn 1937

For the autumn manoeuvres held at this time, the Balkenkreuz national insignia were replaced by red circles, these indicating the 'red force'. The jagged edges between the dark brown (61), medium green (62) and pale grey (63) uppersurface camouflage is typical of this period.

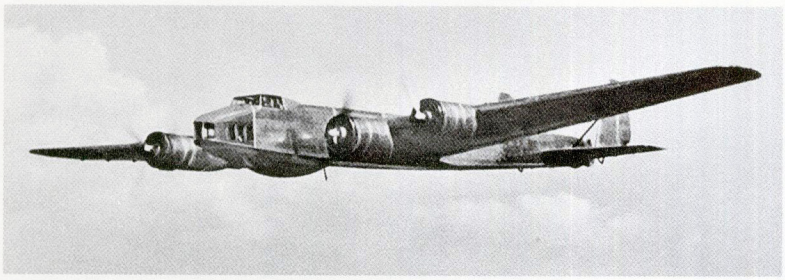
1917-1937

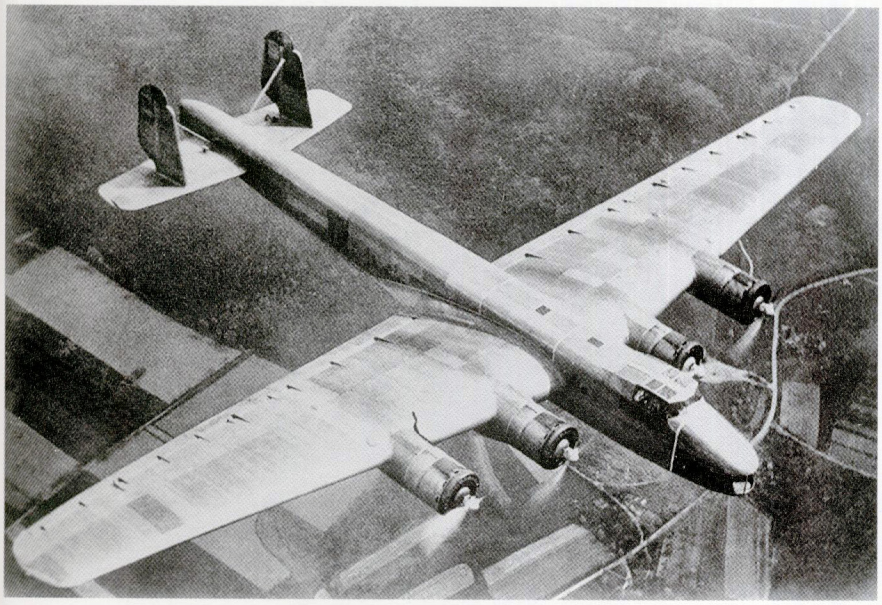
RIGHT: All early Do 17s were delivered in the standard bomber scheme of dark brown (61), medium green (62) and pale grey (63) uppersurfaces with pale blue (65) beneath. At this time it would appear that radio call signs were not applied at the factory as was to become the practice later.

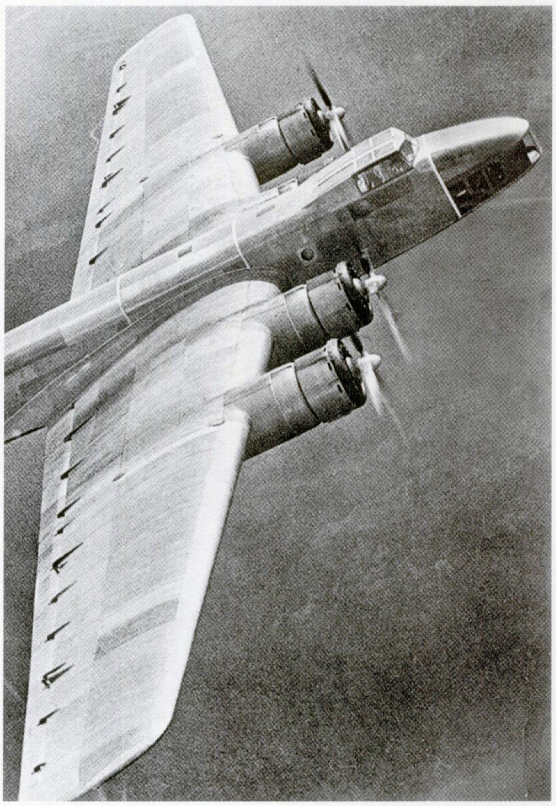


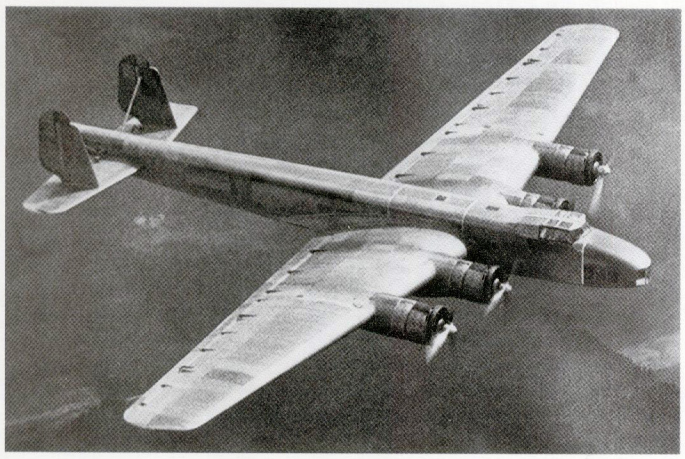
BELOW: Some early production Do 17 E-1s, although painted in the three colour camouflage scheme introduced in 1936, were delivered with civil registrations combined with Balkenkreuz national insignia. This aircraft, D-A+OTM, was probably delivered to KG 255.

LEFT: This Do 17 E-1 of 2./KG 255 is typical of German bomber unit aircraft during 1937. It has three-colour uppersurface camouflage with the code 54+O12 painted in black on the fuselage sides and above and below the wings. All Balkenkreuz national insignia applied at this time had narrow white outlines edged in black.

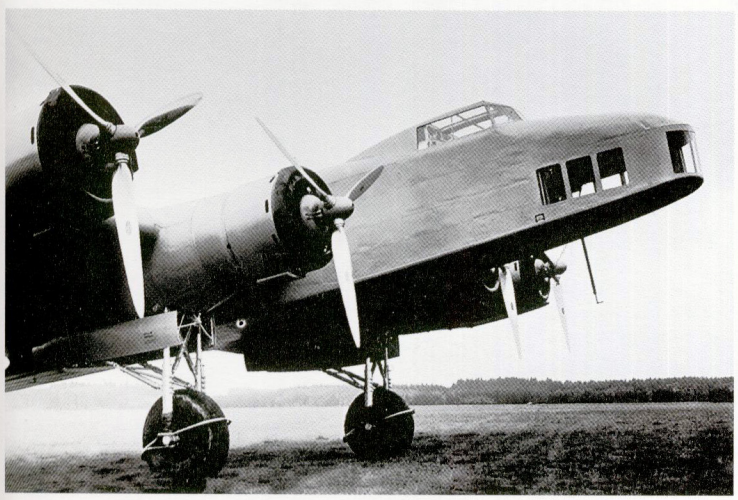


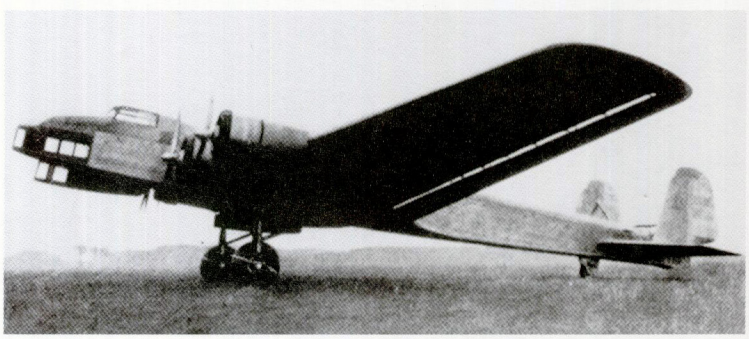




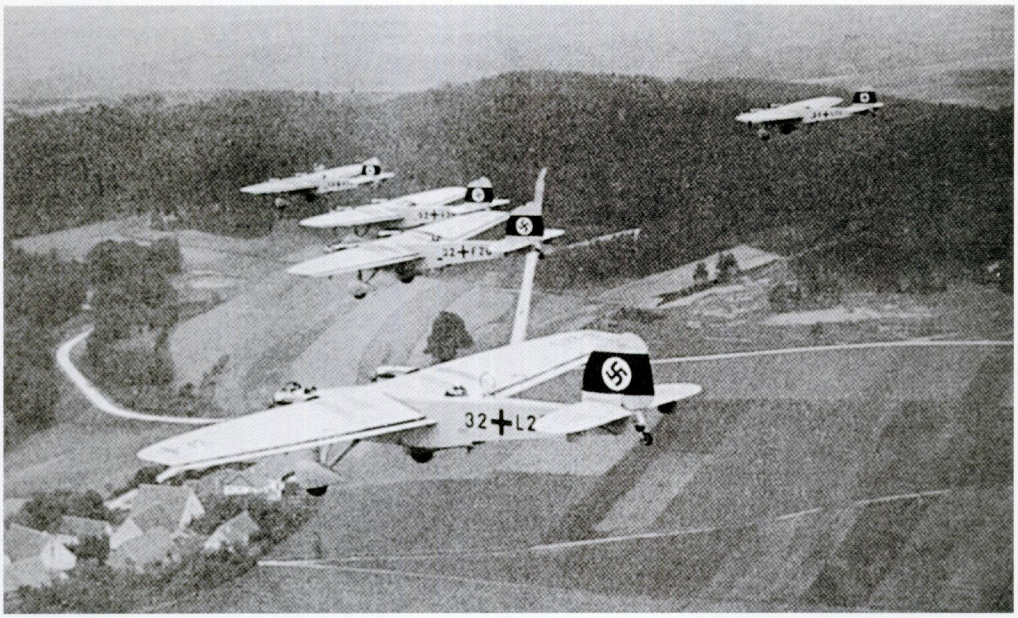


THIS PAGE: During 1934 the Luftwaffe Chief of Staff, General Walter Wever, proposed the construction of a long-range strategic bomber able to attack targets in the north of Scotland or in the Urals from German bases. The specification for such an aircraft was placed with the Dornier and Junkers companies, both of whom had experience with long-range multi-engined aircraft. The Dornier project, the Do 19, was a somewhat ugly mid-wing monoplane with slab-sided fuselage and twin fins and rudders. It was powered by four 715 hp Bramo 322 H-2 radials and had a retractable undercarriage. A crew of nine was to be carried, comprising pilot, co-pilot/navigator, bomb-aimer, radio operator and five gunners. Armament was to comprise a nose turret housing a 7.9 mm MG 15 machine-gun, a similar gun in the tail and two large two-man turrets in both the dorsal and ventral positions each housing a single 20 mm cannon. The prototype Do 19 V1 first flew on 28 October 1936 without armament. It was initially unmarked, but the civil registration D-AGAI was later applied. Tests showed that the aircraft was already under-powered, managing only to attain a speed of 315 km/h (196 mph). It was quickly realised that the heavy and cumbersome two-man turrets would further reduce the aircraft's effectiveness and these were abandoned. Nevertheless, work went ahead on the 810 hp BMW 132 F-powered Do 19 V2 and the V3 the second of which was to be the first with armament, but the death of Wever in an air crash in June 1936 had forced a rethink of the original 'Ural Bomber' proposal and the type was abandoned and the all existing prototypes were scrapped.

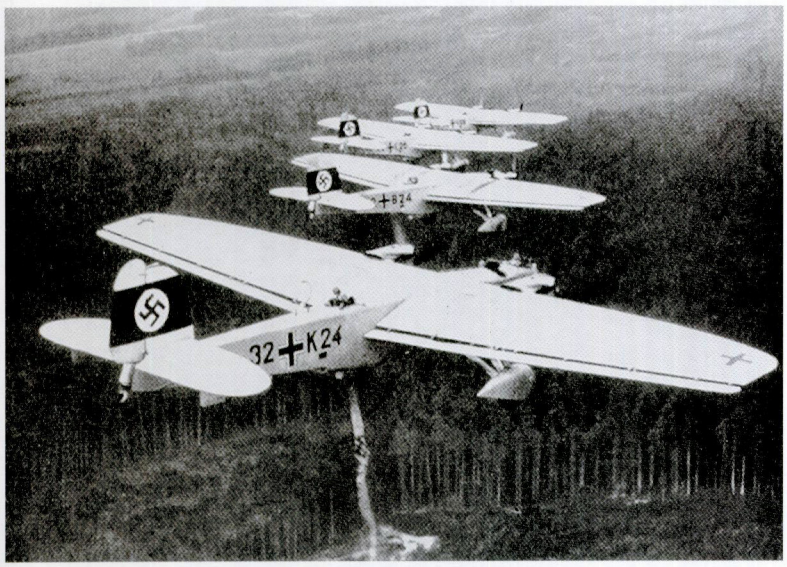




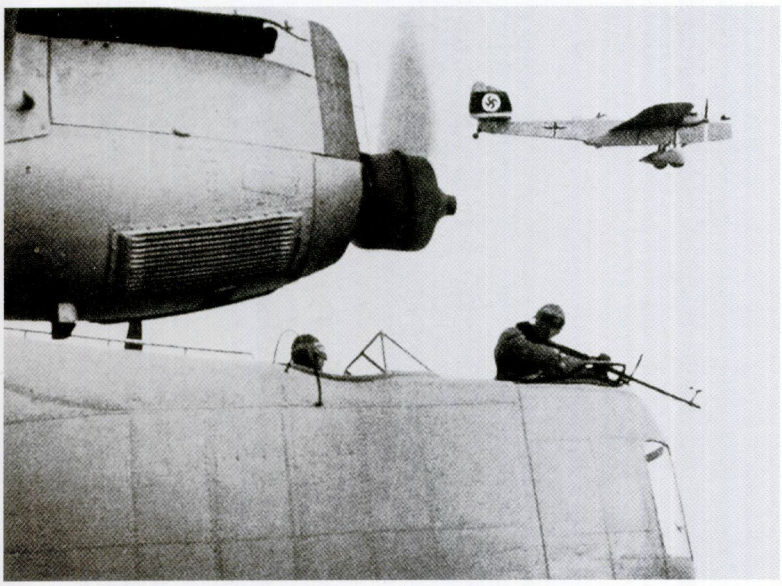
ABOVE: The Do 19 V2 was virtually complete when it, like the half-finished V3, was scrapped. The V1 prototype was experimentally fitted with a mock-up glazed gondola fairing beneath the nose which was to house the bomb-aimer.



LEFT: A formation of Do 23 Gs of 6./KG 153 in peacetime vee formation near Finsterwalde. The aircraft are painted pale grey overall with the black and white Hakenkreuz emblazoned across a bright red band across the fin and rudder. The pre-war five character code is carried on both sides of the fuselage in black, with '32' painted above the port and below the starboard wing, inboard of the Balkenkreuz and '26' on the opposite flying surface. The individual letter was painted on top of the fuselage centre section.

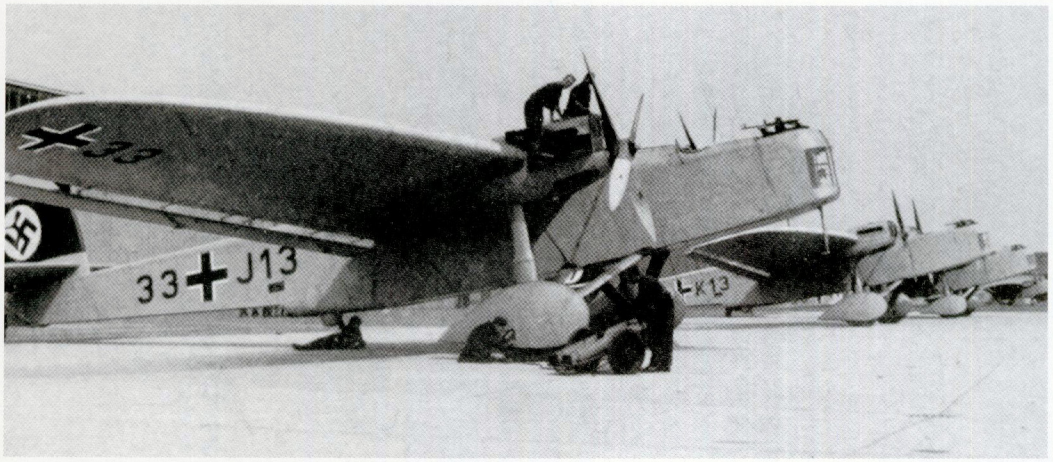


ABOVE: Four Do 23 Gs of II./KG 153 in flight over the Finsterwalde area some time in 1936. From the nearest aircraft, the Do 23s carry the codes 32+K24 and 32+B24 (4./KG 153), 32+L25 (5./KG 153) and 32+E26 (6./KG 153).



ABOVE: Mechanics at work on the starboard 750 hp BMW VI engine of a Do 23. The somewhat clumsy fixed, spatted undercarriage is notable as is the four bladed wooden propeller and generator mounted under the wing centre section near the fuselage.

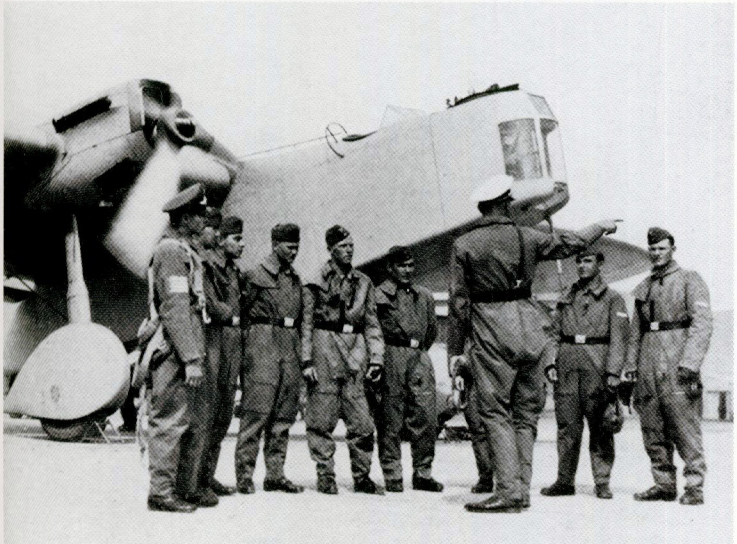
LEFT: This close-up of a Do 23 shows to advantage the open pilot's and gunner's position in the fuselage nose. The gunner was provided with a single 7.9 mm MG 15 flexibly-mounted machine-gun on a D 30 mounting ring.



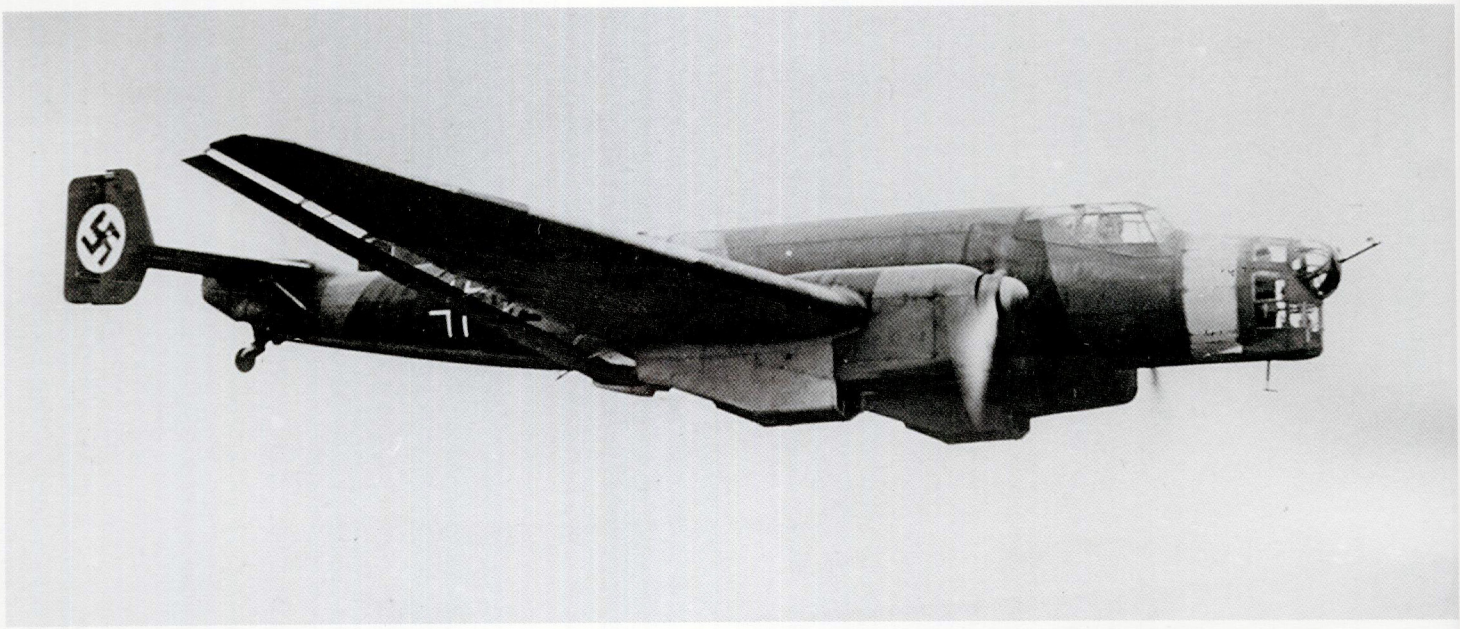
LEFT: The Do 23 G began to replace the Ju 52/3m in service with I./KG 253 at Gotha in April 1936. These aircraft carry the standard five-character code on both sides of the fuselage and above and below the wing. The aircraft nearest the camera, 33+J13, belonged to the 3.Staffel.

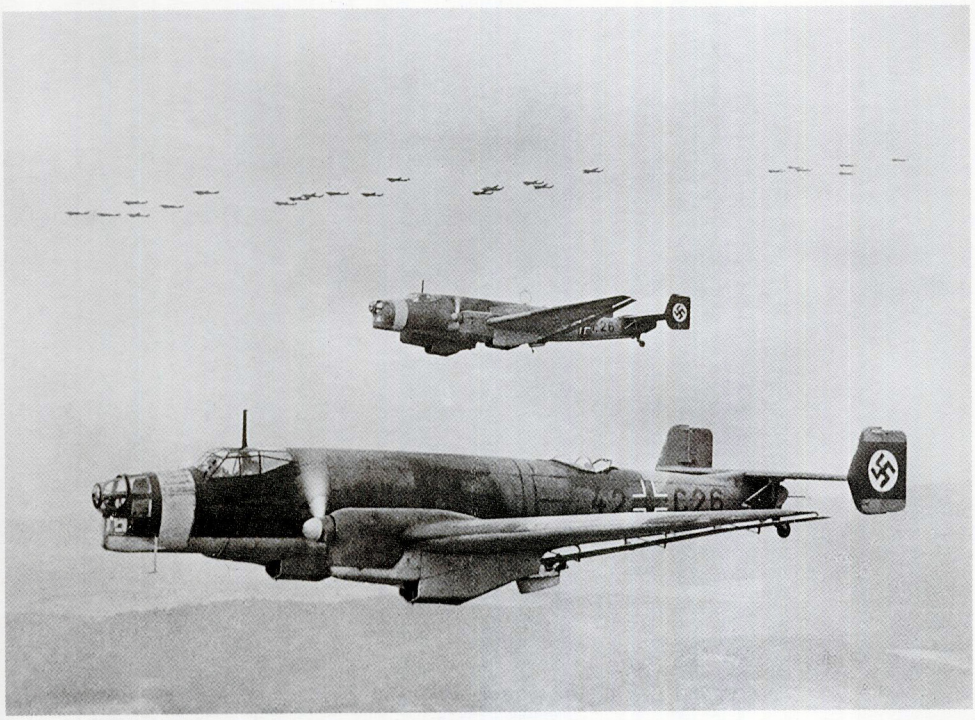
BELOW: Although 150 Do 11s and 222 Do 13s (an interim version of the Do 11 with a fixed undercarriage and Junkers-style double-wing flaps) were intended to be built, both types were abandoned due to their structural weakness and replaced by the Do 23. This Do 23, which carries a civil registration, was probably used as a squadron 'hack' aircraft.

BELOW: An officer directs two Do 23 crews prior to a training flight. The aircraft carried a crew of four comprising pilot, navigator/bomb-aimer, ventral and dorsal gunner.

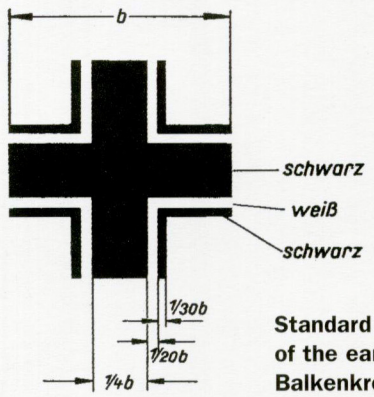


ABOVE: After service with the Luftwaffe bomber force, several Do 23s were delivered to parachute training schools. This aircraft, which has its W.Nr. 456 painted on the fuselage nose in white, was finished in black green and dark green uppersurfaces with pale blue beneath.



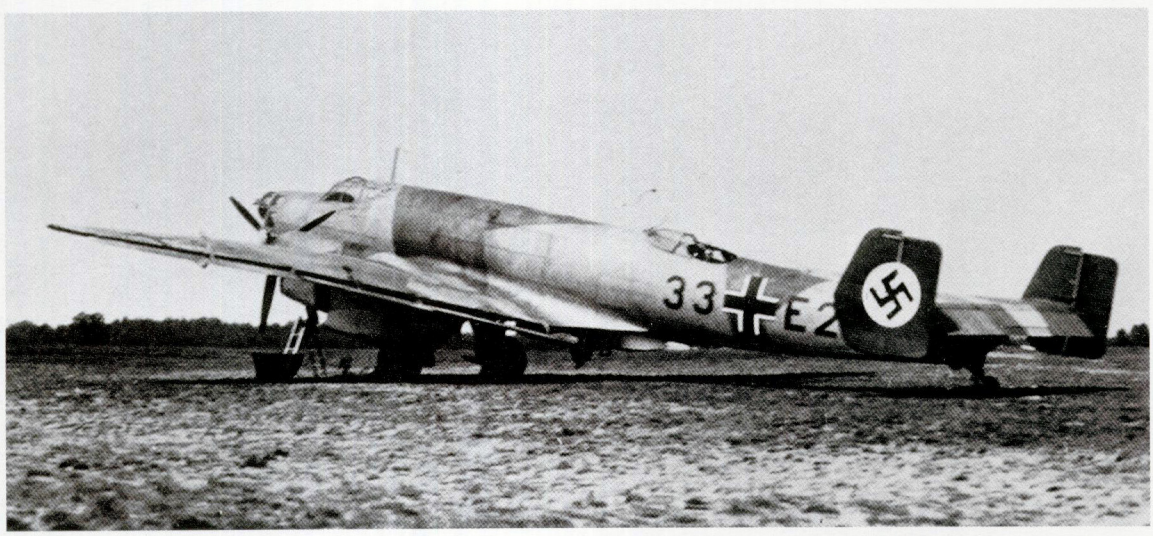


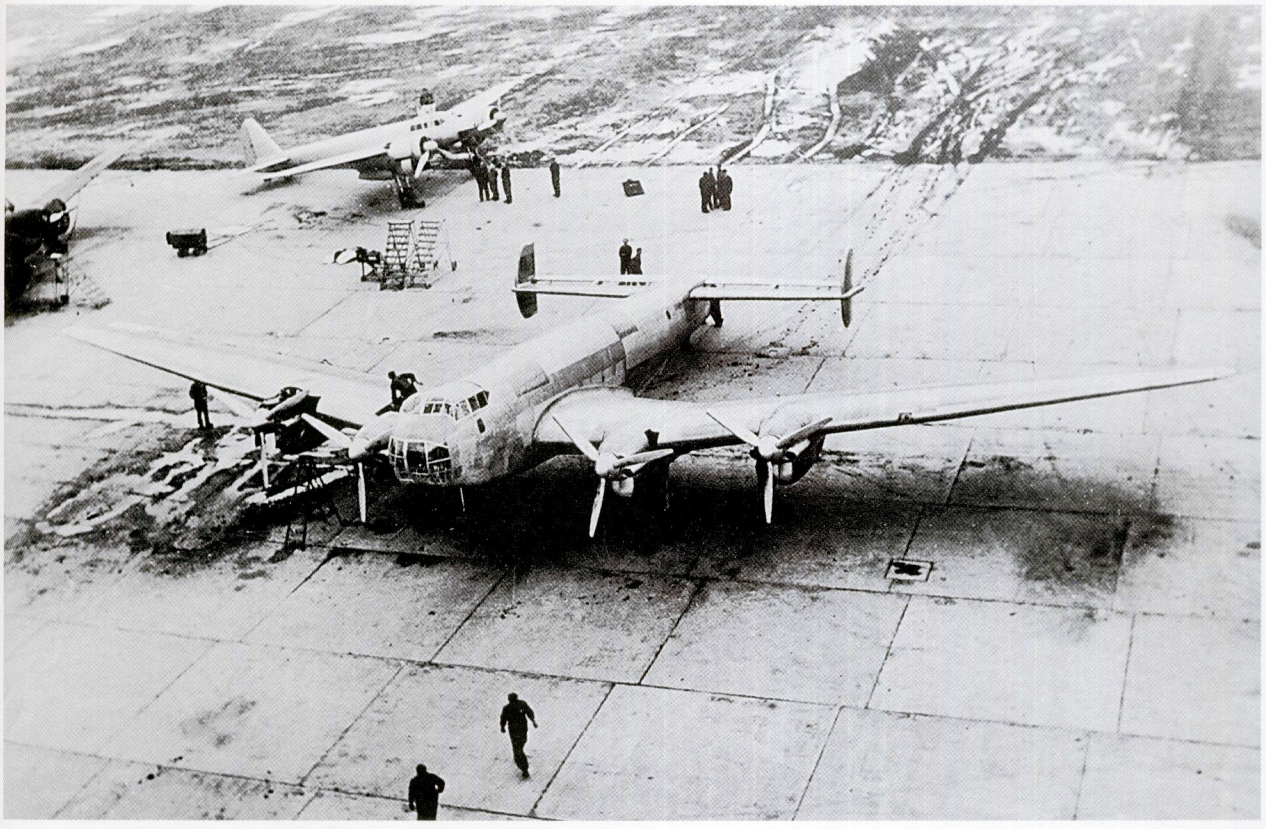
ABOVE AND LEFT: II./KG 254 was formed on 1 April 1937 at Eschwege under Obstlt. Josef Hilgers. It was one of the first bomber units to be equipped with the Ju 86 D-1. On 1 November 1938 it was redesignated II./KG 155, a new II./KG 254 being formed at Gütersloh from IV./KG 254 on the same day. The first two numbers of the code, '42' indicated Luftkreiskommando IV's ('4') second ('2') Geschwader (KG 254). The remaining part of the code indicated individual aircraft 'C' of the second Gruppe's '2' sixth Staffel '6'. The yellow band around the nose was applied in washable paint for an exercise.



Standard proportions of the early style Balkenkreuz.

RIGHT: II./KG 253 'General Wever' was formed from scratch on 1 April 1936 and equipped initially with the Ju 52/3m. During the spring of 1937 these were exchanged for Ju 86, but these aircraft gave continuous trouble because of their unreliable Jumo Diesel engines. This Ju 86 D carries the familiar three colour camouflage scheme of the pre-war period with the unit code painted in black on the fuselage sides.

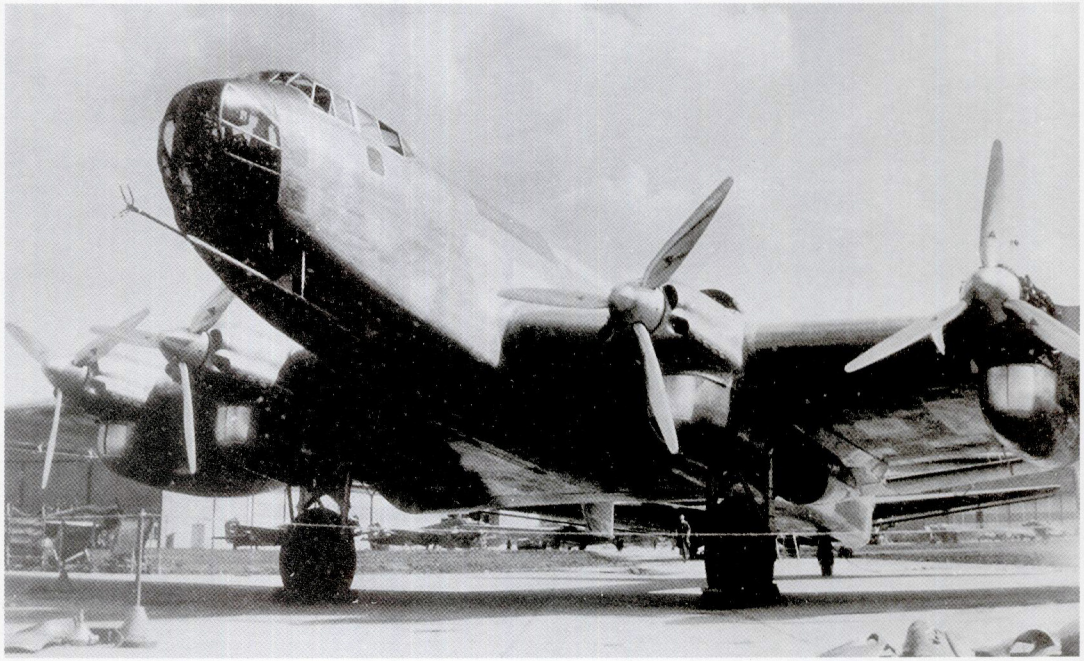


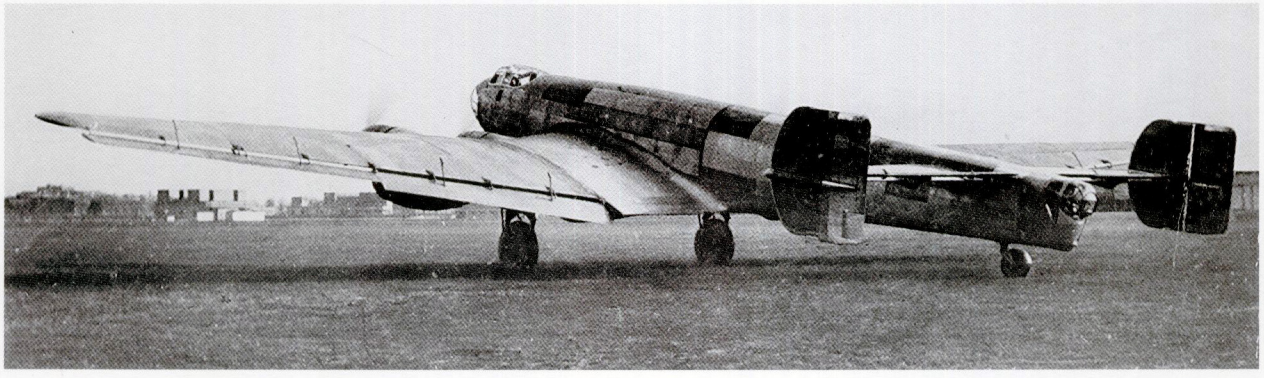


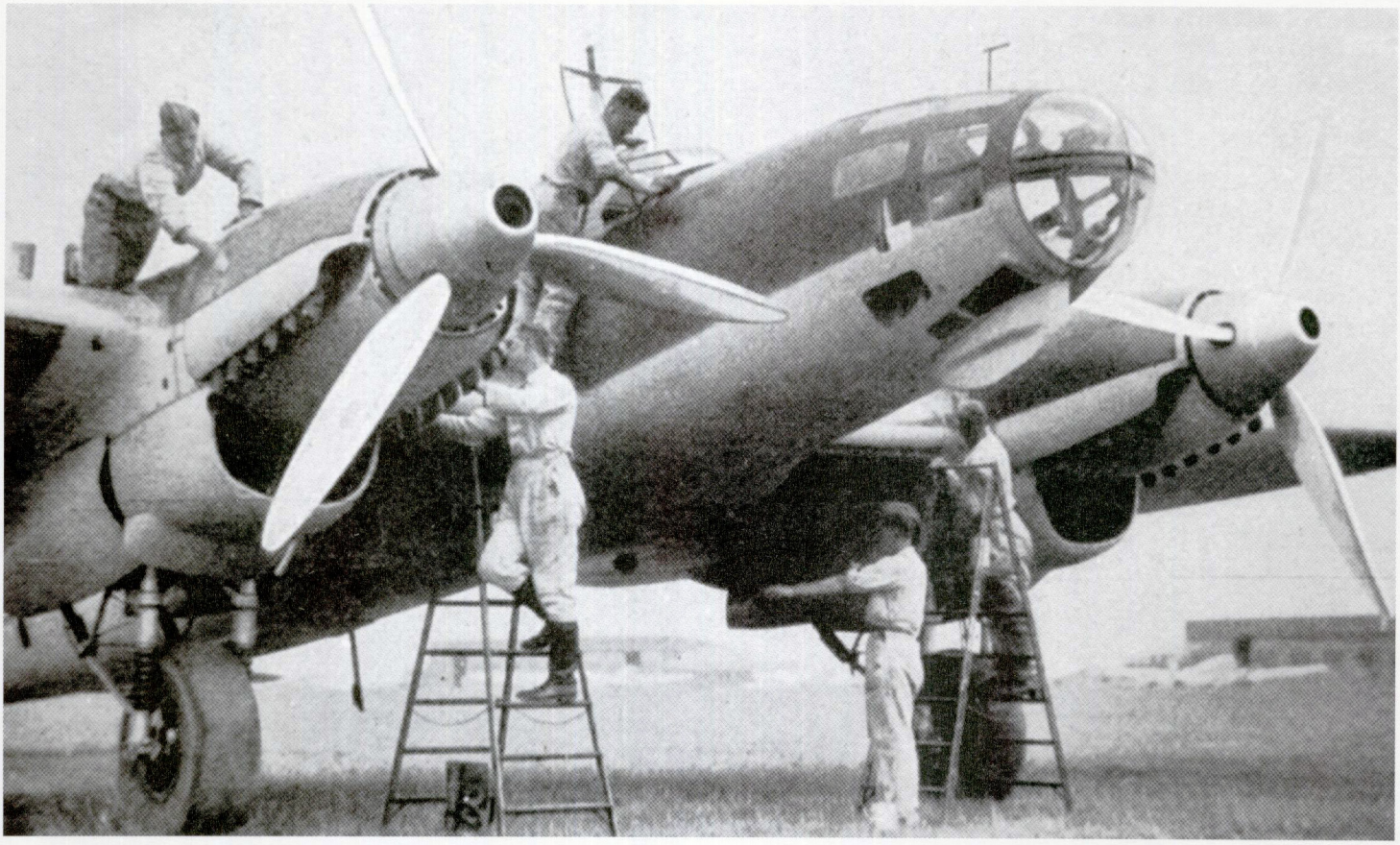
LEFT: A busy scene at the Junkers airfield at Dessau as the Ju 89 V1 is prepared for a test. These tests were to show that the aircraft had a maximum speed of 390 km/h (242 mph), but installation of armament would have reduced this performance considerably. It was similar to the Do 19 with a 7.9 mm machine-gun in the nose and tail and a 20 mm cannon in a dorsal and ventral turret. The aircraft in the background of this photograph is the Ju 88 V1 which was also undergoing tests at this time.

RIGHT: The Ju 89 was designed to the same 'Ural Bomber' specification as the Do 19 but proved to have a much better performance than its rival. Basically an enlarged Ju 86, the prototype Ju 89 V1 was powered by four 1,075 hp Jumo 211 engines driving three-bladed Hamilton propellers. It made its first flight in December 1936, later having the registration D-AFIT applied.

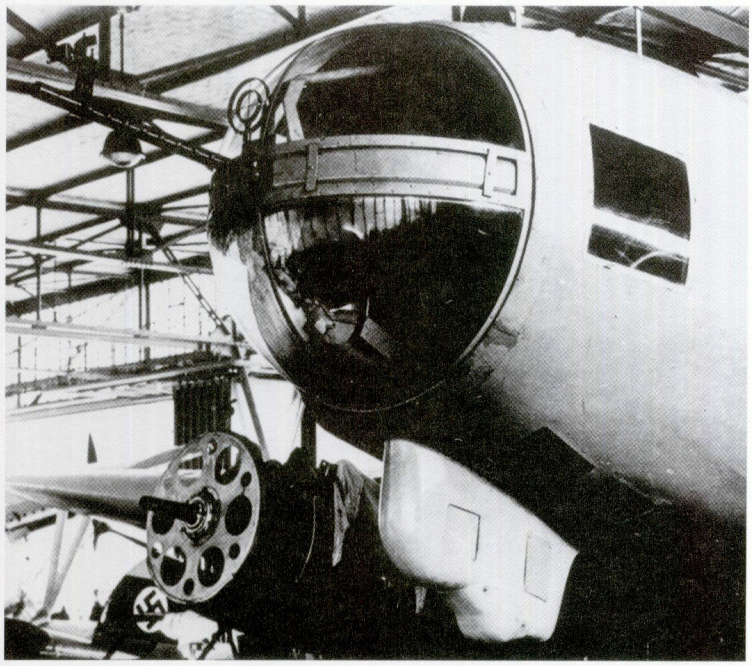
BELOW: The Ju 89 V1 was joined by a second prototype early in 1937. This was generally similar to the V1, but was powered by four Daimler-Benz DB 600 engines and was later registered D-ALAT. Construction of a third prototype, which was to carry mock-ups of the two fuselage turrets began, but following the cancellation of the original 'Ural Bomber' programme on 29 April 1937, the airframe was converted to serve as the forerunner of the Ju 90 commercial transport. Both the Ju 89 V1 and V2 served briefly with the transport unit KGrzbV 105 during the invasion of Norway in April 1940.







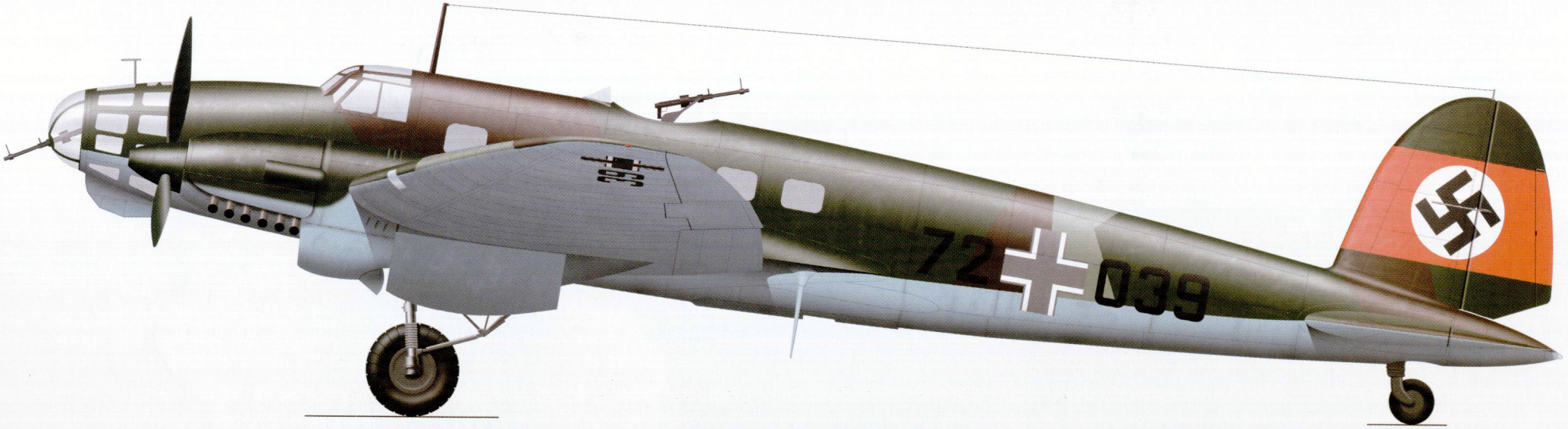
ABOVE: Heinkel mechanics polishing an He 111 B-2 prior to a test flight. It is possible that this aircraft is the V18, D-ADUM, which was used to test various types of bomb racks and launching devices.



ABOVE: Close-up of the 7.9 mm MG 15 machine-gun installation fitted to the He 111 B. At this time the aircraft carried a total defensive armament of three MG 15s.

RIGHT: Ground personnel connect fuel hoses to an underground storage tank in preparation to re-fuel this He 111 F-4. Note the 7.9 mm MG 15 has been removed from the spherical mounting in the glazed nose and the retractable ventral 7.9 mm MG 15 'dustbin' in the extended position.

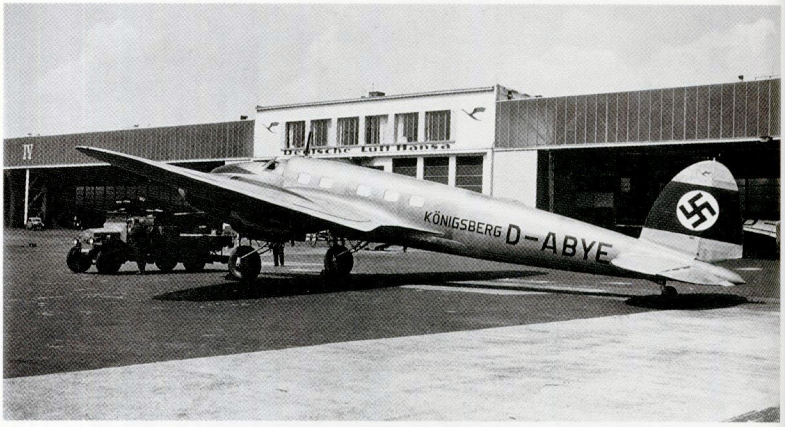
RIGHT: III./KG 257 was newly formed on 1 April 1937 at Hannover-Langenhagen, being redesignated IV./KG 152 on 1 October of the same year to replace the old unit with that designation. The remaining two Gruppen of KG 257 remained in existence until 1 May 1939 when they were redesignated I. and II./KG 26 respectively.



Heinkel He 111 B-1 of 9./KG 257, summer 1937
The aircraft carries typical camouflage and markings in use during the period from early 1936 to early 1939. The uppersurfaces are painted in a segmented pattern of dark brown, pale grey and medium green with pale blue beneath. 9./KG 257 based at Hannover-Langenhagen was redesignated 12./KG 152 on 1 October 1937.

1917-1937

BELOW: German troops stand to attention as Adolf Hitler strides purposefully from his personal Ju 52/3m, D-2600. The first military action in which the German leader became involved was the re-occupation of the Rhineland in March 1936.



ABOVE: The He 111 was designed in 1934 ostensibly as a high-speed airliner but was also intended from the outset to fulfil the role of medium bomber for the still secret Luftwaffe. The He 111 C-0, of which six were built, was the only airliner sub-type made to a Lufthansa order. This aircraft, the C-04, D-ABYE, was delivered to the airline during the summer of 1936, serving on the Berlin-Amsterdam, Berlin-München and Berlin-Köln routes.

LEFT: The respected Generalfeldmarschall Paul von Hindenburg, was the second premier of the Weimar Republic. He held a dislike for Hitler, but the old man was unable to prevent the rise of the Nazi leader and his party. Hindenburg died on 2 August 1934, and later, in 1936, the Luftwaffe bomber unit, KG 152 was named 'Hindenburg' in his honour.

RIGHT: One of the first great German fighter pilots, Hptm. Oswald Boelcke was awarded the Pour le Mérite on 12 January 1916 while leading Jasta 2. A brilliant organiser and instructor, Boelcke was killed on 28 October 1916 when his fighter collided with another during combat. He had attained 40 aerial victories. KG 154 was named 'Boelcke' in his honour.

Luftkreiskommando areas 1 November 1937

Luftkreiskommando 1	Königsberg
Luftkreiskommando 2	Berlin
Luftkreiskommando 3	Dresden
Luftkreiskommando 4	Münster
Luftkreiskommando 5	München
Luftkreiskommando 6	Kiel (Naval Units)*
Luftkreiskommando 7	Hamburg

* Naval units had no designated area

The Original System of Bomber Unit Codes

In the the following tables, the symbol '▮' has been used as substitute for the aircraft's individual letter. Several units also used the last two digits 'OK' (for example, '54+AOK' carried by a Do 17 E-1 of KG 255 '*Alpen*'). This variation might indicate an aircraft of the *Geschwader Stab* flight

Luftkreiskommando II

I./KG 152 *'Hindenburg'*	**1./KG 152**	25+▮11	**2./KG 152**	25+▮12	**3./KG 152**	25+▮13
II./KG 152 *'Hindenburg'* (later **II.(*Kampf*)/LG 1**)	**4./KG 152**	25+▮24	**5./KG 152**	25+▮25	**6./KG 152**	25+▮26
III./KG 152 *'Hindenburg'* (later **III.(*Kampf*)/LG 1**)	**7./KG 152**	25+▮37	**8./KG 152**	25+▮38	**9./KG 152**	25+▮39
I./KGzbV 1	**1./KGzbV 1**	27+▮11	**2./KGzbV 1**	27+▮12	**3./KGzbV 1**	27+▮13
II./KGzbV 1 (note the different use of *Gruppe* numbers by this unit)	**4./KGzbV 1**	27+▮21	**5./KGzbV 1**	27+▮22	**6./KGzbV 1**	27+▮23

Luftkreiskommando III

I./KG 153	**1./KG 153**	32+▮11	**2./KG 153**	32+▮12	**3./KG 153**	32+▮13
II./KG 153	**4./KG 153**	32+▮24	**5./KG 153**	32+▮25	**6./KG 153**	32+▮26
III./KG 153	**7./KG 153**	32+▮37	**8./KG 153**	32+▮38	**9./KG 153**	32+▮39
I./KG 253 *'General Wever'*	**1./KG 253**	33+▮11	**2./KG 253**	33+▮12	**3./KG 253**	33+▮13
II./KG 253 *'General Wever'*	**4./KG 253**	33+▮24	**5./KG 253**	33+▮25	**6./KG 253**	33+▮26
III./KG 253 *'General Wever'*	**7./KG 253**	33+▮37	**8./KG 253**	33+▮38	**9./KG 253**	33+▮39

Luftkreiskommando IV

I./KG 154 *'Boelcke'*	**1./KG 154**	41+▮11	**2./KG 154**	41+▮12	**3./KG 154**	41+▮13
II./KG 154 *'Boelcke'*	**4./KG 154**	41+▮24	**5./KG 154**	41+▮25	**6./KG 154**	41+▮26
III./KG 154 *'Boelcke'*	**7./KG 154**	41+▮37	**8./KG 154**	41+▮38	**9./KG 154**	41+▮39
I./KG 254	**1./KG 254**	42+▮11	**2./KG 254**	42+▮12	**3./KG 254**	42+▮13
II./KG 254	**4./KG 254**	42+▮24	**5./KG 254**	42+▮25	**6./KG 254**	42+▮26
III./KG 254	**7./KG 254**	42+▮37	**8./KG 254**	42+▮38	**9./KG 254**	42+▮39

Luftkreiskommando V

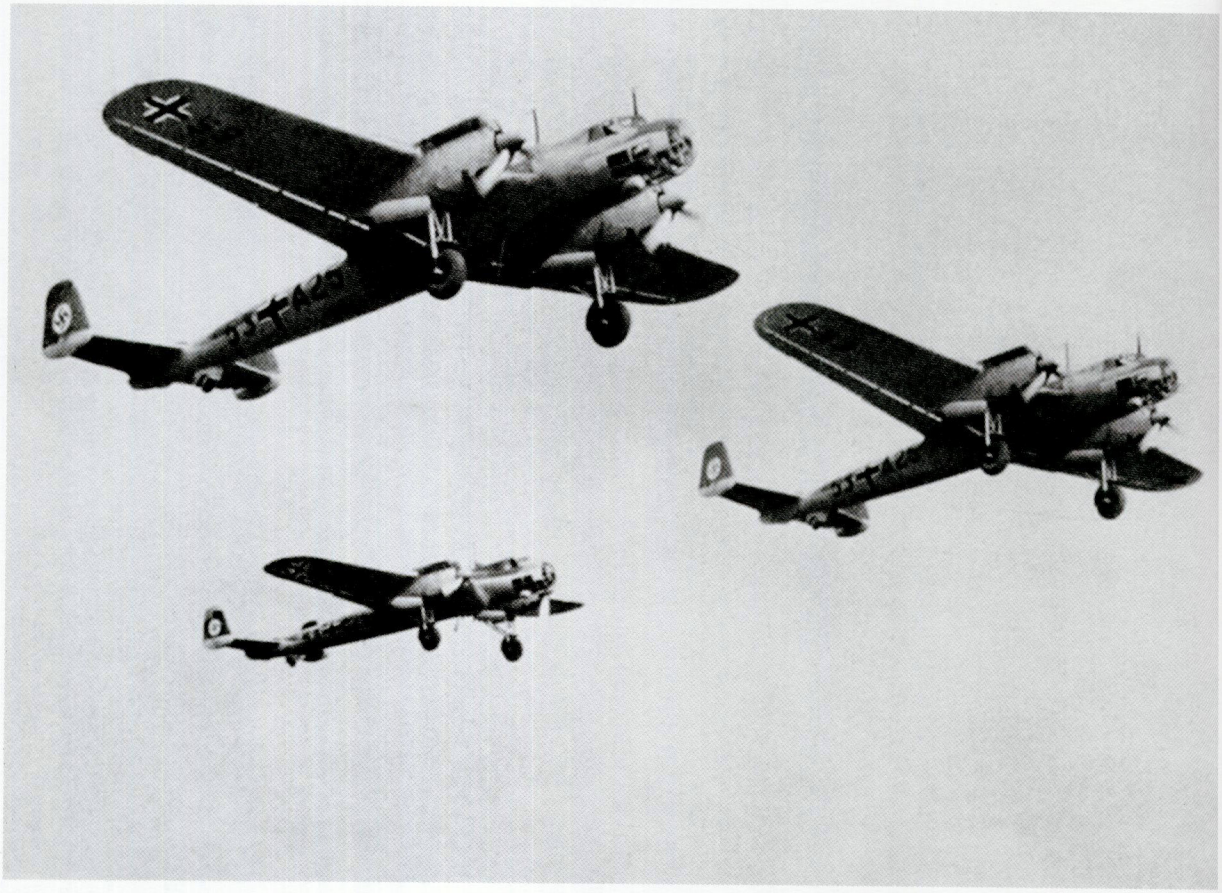
I./KG 155	**1./KG 155**	53+▮11	**2./KG 155**	53+▮12	**3./KG 155**	53+▮13
II./KG 155	**4./KG 155**	53+▮24	**5./KG 155**	53+▮25	**6./KG 155**	53+▮26
III./KG 155	**7./KG 155**	53+▮37	**8./KG 155**	53+▮38	**9./KG 155**	53+▮39
I./KG 255 *'Alpen'*	**1./KG 255**	54+▮11	**2./KG 255**	54+▮12	**3./KG 255**	54+▮13
II./KG 255 *'Alpen'*	**4./KG 255**	54+▮24	**5./KG 255**	54+▮25	**6./KG 255**	54+▮26
III./KG 255 *'Alpen'*	**7./KG 255**	54+▮37	**8./KG 255**	54+▮38	**9./KG 255**	54+▮39
I./KG 355	**1./KG 355**	55+▮11	**2./KG 355**	55+▮12	**3./KG 355**	55+▮13
II./KG 355	**4./KG 355**	55+▮24	**5./KG 355**	55+▮25	**6./KG 355**	55+▮26
III./KG 355	**7./KG 355**	55+▮37	**8./KG 355**	55+▮38	**9./KG 355**	55+▮39

Luftkreiskommando VII

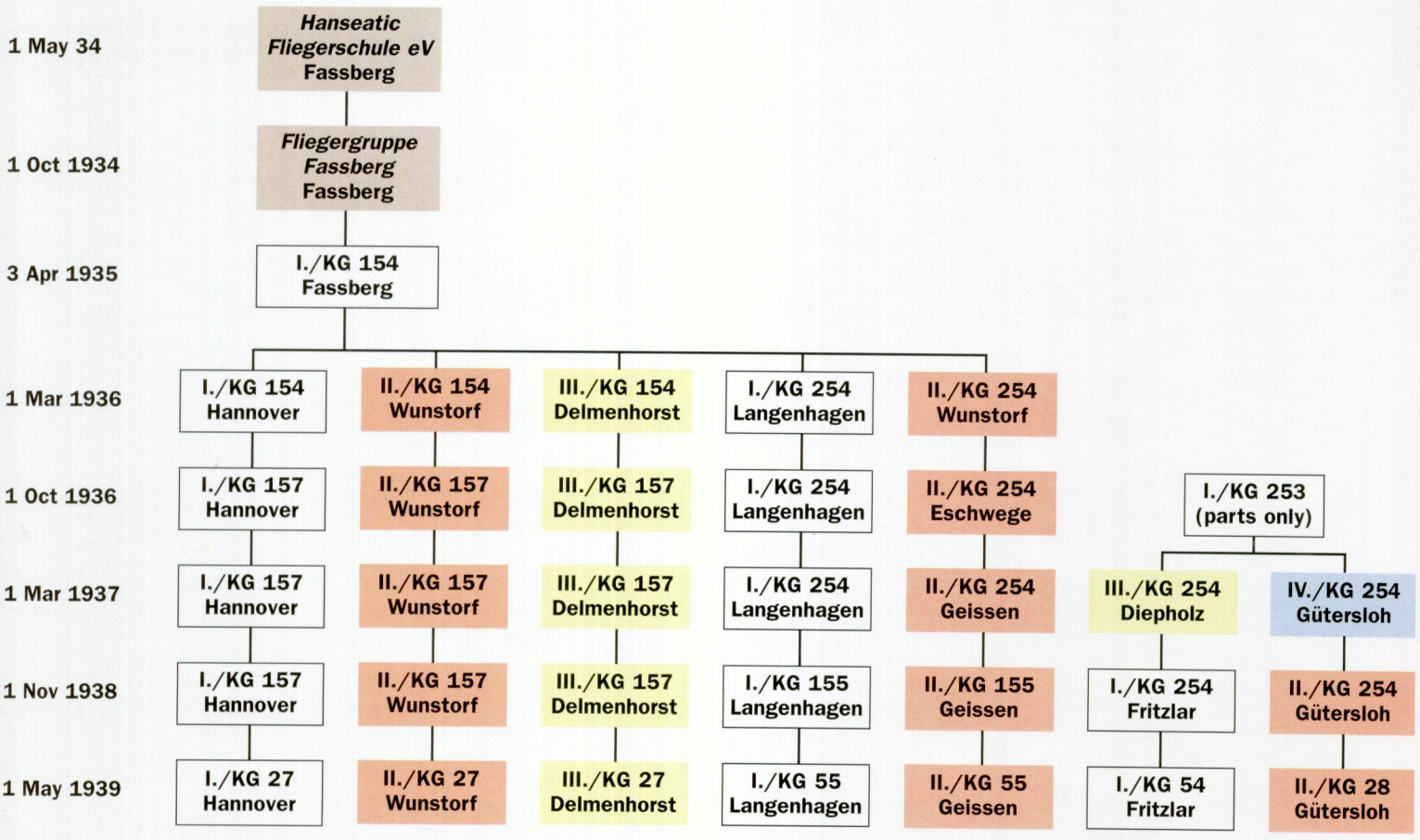
On 12 October 1937 *Luftkreiskommando* VII with headquarters in Braunschweig was established, taking over areas formally covered by *Luftkreiskommando* II, IV and V.

I./KG 157 *'Boelcke'*	**1./KG 157**	71+▮11	**2./KG 157**	71+▮12	**3./KG 157**	71+▮13
II./KG 157 *'Boelcke'*	**4./KG 157**	71+▮24	**5./KG 157**	71+▮25	**6./KG 157**	71+▮26
III./KG 157 *'Boelcke'*	**7./KG 157**	71+▮37	**8./KG 157**	71+▮38	**9./KG 157**	71+▮39
I./KG 257	**1./KG 257**	72+▮11	**2./KG 257**	72+▮12	**3./KG 257**	72+▮13
II./KG 257	**4./KG 257**	72+▮24	**5./KG 257**	72+▮25	**6./KG 257**	72+▮26
III./KG 257	**7./KG 257**	72+▮37	**8./KG 257**	72+▮38	**9./KG 257**	72+▮39

RIGHT: Do not believe all you see! This photograph, apparently of a Kette of three Do 17 E-1s of 5./KG 153, was faked by the German propaganda machine. At first sight the two aircraft nearest the camera appear to be different but, on closer study, it is possible to see that they are in fact the same machine, 53+A25, and reproduced twice in the same photograph! The aircraft in the background however, is 52+C25. Whether this subterfuge was done purely to improve the aesthetics of the photograph or whether it was an attempt to try to prove that the strength of the Luftwaffe Kampfflieger was larger than it in fact was, remains purely a matter for conjecture.



The Descendants of *Kampfgeschwader* Boelcke

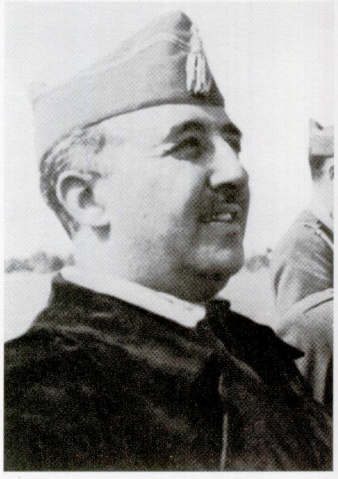


The Spanish Civil War
July 1936 to March 1939

'I arrived at Guernica on April 26, at 4.40 pm. I had hardly left the car when the bombardments began. The people were terrified. They fled, abandoning their livestock in the market place. The bombardment lasted until 7.45. During that time, five minutes did not elapse without the sky's being black with German planes. The planes descended very low, the machine gun fire tearing up the woods and roads, in whose gutters, huddled together, lay old men, women and children. Before long it was impossible to see as far as five hundred yards, owing to the heavy smoke. Fire enveloped the whole city. Screams of lamentation were heard everywhere, and the people, filled with terror, knelt, lifting their hands to heaven as it to implore divine protection...'

Father Alberto Onaindia, Catholic Priest
Unofficial Diplomatic Agent to the Basque Country in Paris
27 April 1937

On 18 July 1936 a revolution broke out in Spain, led principally by General Francisco Franco, who had earlier been relieved of his post as Chief of General Staff and made Governor of the Canary Islands. As the revolution developed, Franco was flown from the Canary Islands to Spanish Morocco which had already fallen to his Nationalist forces and possessed some 47,000 well-trained troops. He then appealed to the Fascist regimes in Germany and Italy for help in transporting these troops to the mainland of Spain. Hitler proved extremely amenable to assisting and, on 25 July, asked for twenty Ju 52/3ms to be made available, German involvement proceeding under the name *Unternehmen Feuerzauber* (Operation Magic Fire). The crews of these aircraft were all volunteers who had been officially discharged from the German armed forces and wore civilian clothes.

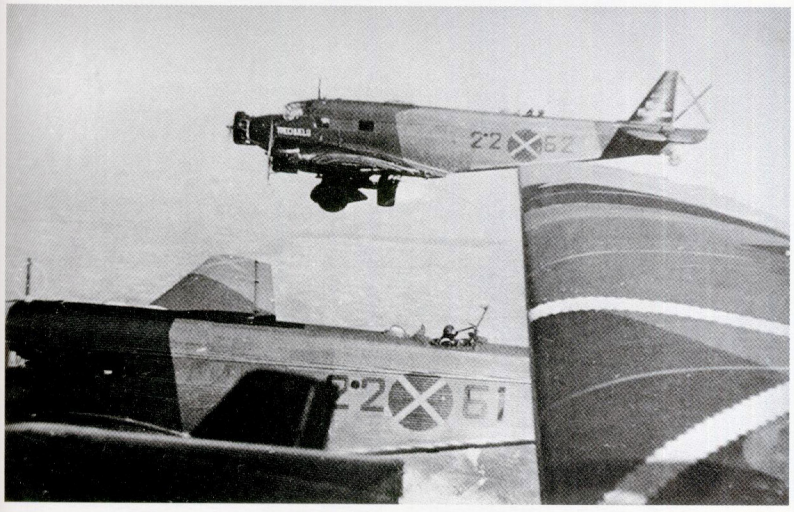


ABOVE: General Francisco Franco, leader of the Nationalist Forces during the Spanish Civil War.

The heavily laden Ju 52s began flying three to four missions a day from late July, ferrying the 'Moros' (Moroccans) to Spain but it was not until 13 August that two of these aircraft actually became involved in the fighting. After the Republican cruiser, *Jamie I*, had been spotted in the Bay of Malaga, the commander of the ten German bomber crews which had meanwhile arrived at Cadiz, *Oblt.* Rudolf Freiherr von Moreau, ordered the modification of two of the Ju 52/3ms to carry six 250 kg bombs. These machines, commanded by von Moreau and *Oblt.* Max Graf Hoyos, then flew an attack on the cruiser which was severely damaged.

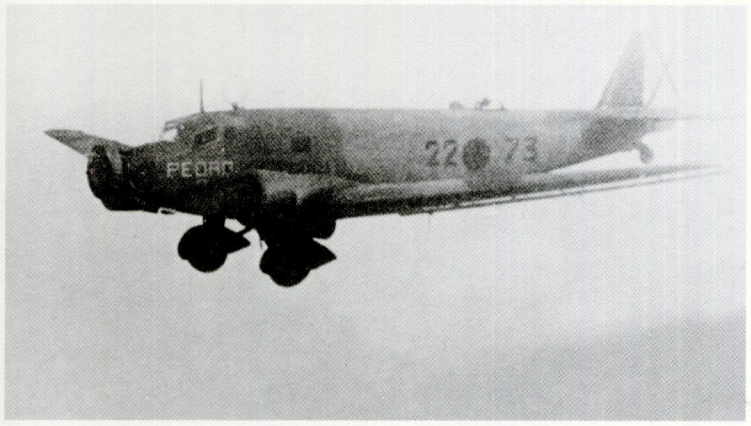
Following this success four more Ju 52/3ms were modified, the total of six aircraft having the names PEDRO 1 to 3 and PABLO 1 to 3 painted on their noses. Command of the PEDROS Kette was entrusted to von Moreau, the PABLOS *Kette* to *Hptm.* Rudolf Joster. The aircraft then began a series of bombing and supply missions on Republican targets in various parts of Spain, often being escorted by the He 51s of the Eberhardt *Kette* under *Oblt.* Kraft Eberhardt. The unit's first casualty was *Lt.* Oskar Kolbitz who was severely wounded by Republican fighters over Madrid on 4 November 1936. Trapped in the retractable gunner's 'dustbin' which had jammed, Kolbitz could not be pulled into the fuselage by his comrades and he was killed when it was crushed as the Ju 52 landed.

BELOW: A flight of Ju 52/3ms of the Spanish Nationalist Air Force. These aircraft could be distinguished by the white diagonal cross painted over the black circle on the fuselage, most Condor Legion aircraft having plain black discs in this position.



Three days after the death of Kolbitz the first Soviet aircraft flown by Russian aircrew, arrived to support the Republicans. This, coupled with the increasing use of 'International Brigades', led Germany to decide to send its own special air component to Spain to replace the earlier clandestine units. Known as the Condor Legion, the component was established with

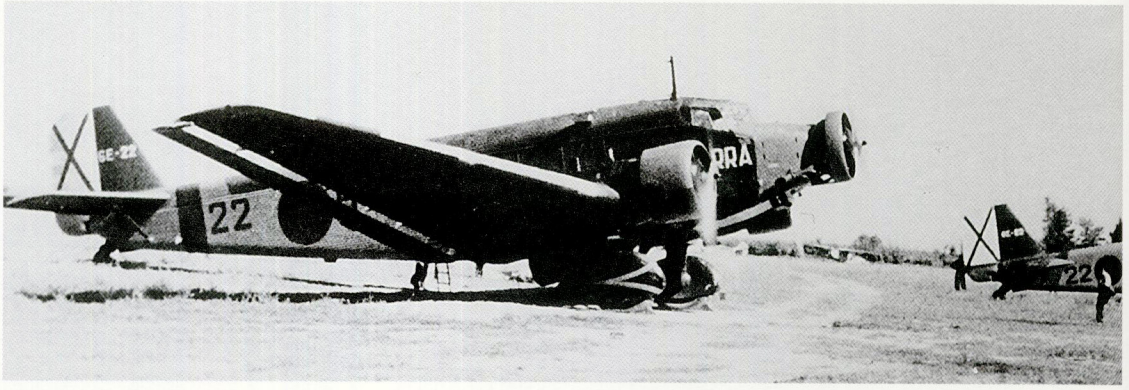
July 1936-March 1939



ABOVE: Of the six original Ju 52/3m bombers to operate in Spain, three were named 'PABLO' and three 'PEDRO'. Command of the PEDROS Kette was entrusted to Oblt. Rudolf Freiherr von Moreau. The names of the aircraft were painted on their noses.

ABOVE: The first bomber sorties flown in Spain by the bomber unit, K/88, were made using converted Ju 52/3ms similar to the aircraft shown here. The semi-retractable ventral 'dustbin' gun position is clearly visible in both photographs.

RIGHT: For conversion from airliner to bomber an Elvemag vertical bomb rack was mounted between the main spars of the Ju 52/3m, capable of carrying eight 250 kg (550 lb) or thirty-two 50 kg (110 lb) bombs. A special hatch was fitted beneath the fuselage which could be rolled back to allow the bombs to fall away.



July 1936-March 1939

ABOVE: General der Flieger Wolfram von Richthofen served as the first Chief of Staff of the Legion Condor in Spain under General Hugo Sperrle.

4,500 volunteers under the command of *Generalmajor* Hugo Sperrle, with *Oberst* Wolfram Freiherr von Richthofen as Chief of Staff. Eventually, the Condor Legion was to reach the size of a *Fliegerkorps* and initially comprised the following aviation components:

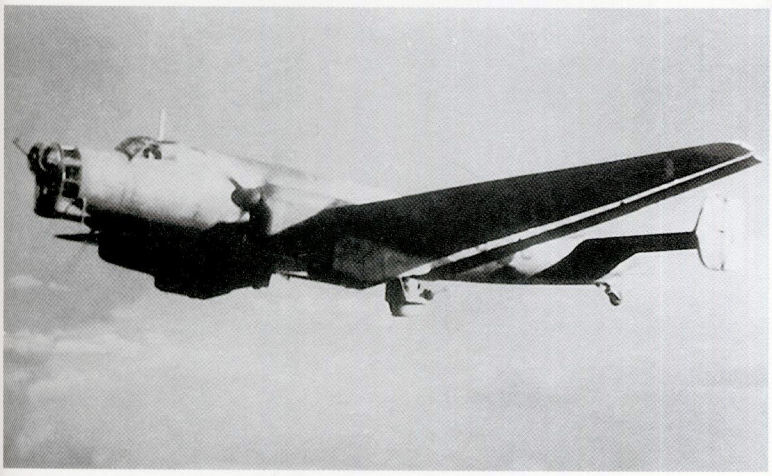
A/88	Reconnaissance *Gruppe* with two *Staffeln*, one with He 70s, the other with He 45s.
AS/88	Naval reconnaissance *Staffel* with nine He 59 and one He 60 floatplane.
J/88	Fighter *Gruppe* with three (later four) *Staffeln* equipped with He 51s.
K/88	Bomber *Gruppe* with three (later four) *Staffeln* equipped with Ju 52/3ms.

The first of the new units to arrive in Spain was K/88 under *Major* Robert Fuchs with twenty Ju 52/3m g3es. Their crews were largely volunteers from I./KG 153 from Merseburg, II./KG 155 from Neukirchen and I./KG 253 from Gotha. After flying from Griefswald by way of Rome and Melilla in Spanish Morocco to Seville, the *Gruppe* was distributed as follows:

1.*Staffel*	*Oblt.* Heinz Liegnitz based at Salamanca/San Fernando
2.*Staffel*	*Hptm.* Anselm Brasser also based at Salamanca/San Fernando
3.*Staffel*	*Hptm.* Krafft von Delmensingen based at Seville and later Salamanca.

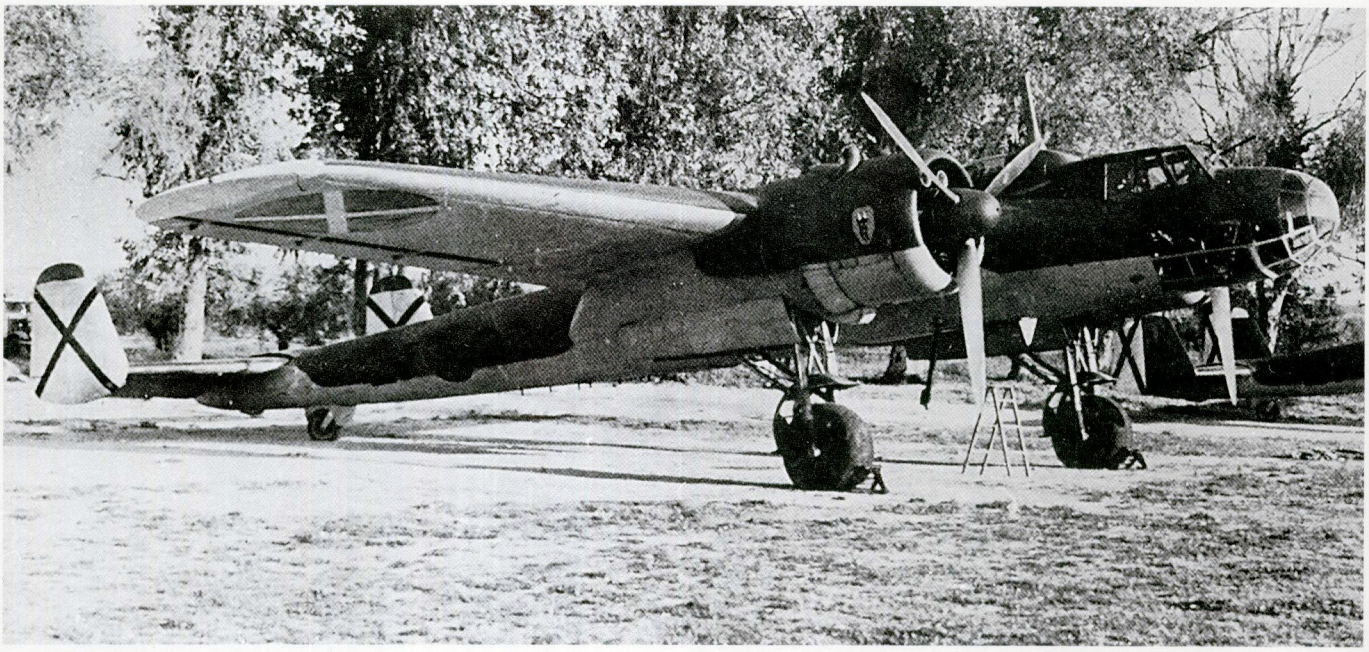
ABOVE: General Hugo Sperrle in conversation with Adolf Hitler. Sperrle was born in 1885 and served in the German flying service during the First World War. He remained in the armed forces after the war, joining the Luftwaffe in 1935. This somewhat abrasive officer was appointed the first commander of the Condor Legion in November 1936, leading it until November 1937.

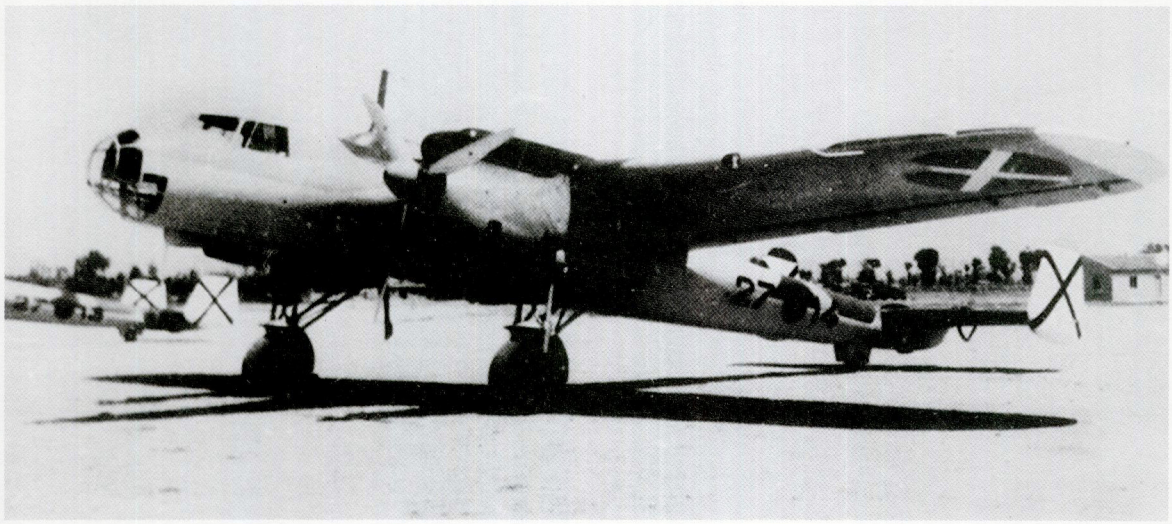
BELOW: This superb in-flight photograph of the Ju 86 D-1 of VB/88 coded 26●5 shows to advantage the retractable ventral 'dustbin' gun position and the double flaps which were a feature of the design.



The first operation to be completed by K/88 was flown on the night of 15-16 November when, following a long approach flight over the Mediterranean via a navigation beacon at Melilla, the ports of Cartagena and Alicante were bombed. The aircraft dropped their bombs from 2,500 m (8,000 ft) in the face of heavy anti-aircraft fire, but achieved little success. In another attack the Ju 52 flown by *Major* Fuchs was severely damaged, and subsequent operations were to prove that the slow aircraft was extremely vulnerable to attack by Republican fighters. Although the defensive armament of the aircraft was increased to five machine guns, the type had to be restricted to night harassing raids against supply lines behind the Madrid Front. By the end of January 1937, operational strength of K/88 had been reduced to only 26 Ju 52s and two He 70s.

July 1936-March 1939



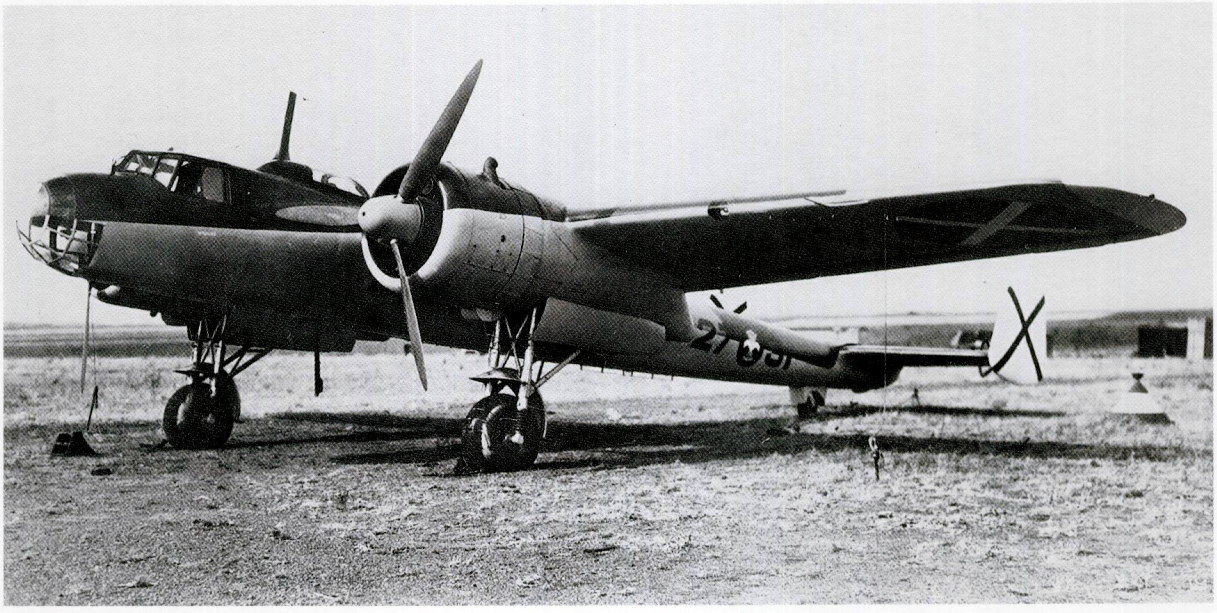


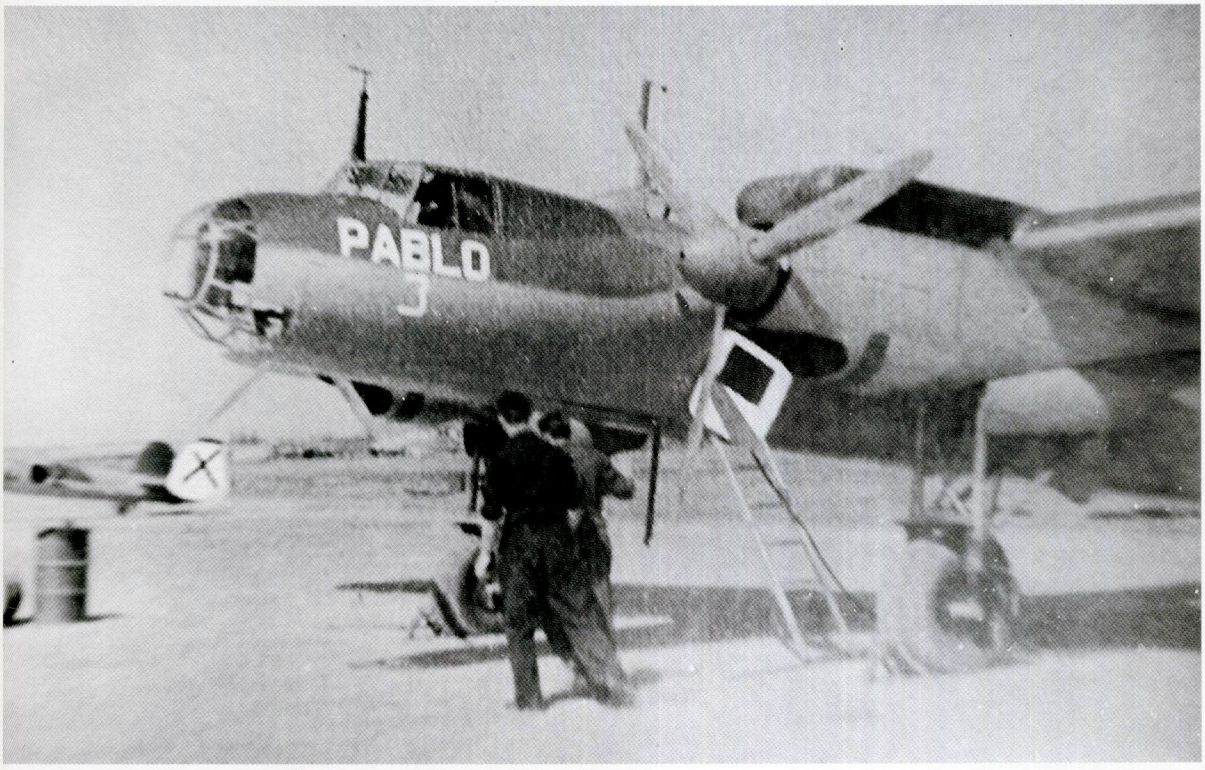
ABOVE AND LEFT: The Do 17s of the reconnaissance unit A/88 often flew with the He 111s of K/88 on bombing missions in Spain. The aircraft above carries the badge of the unit on the outboard of the engine cowlings, a red devil's head with white detail on a pale blue shield.

RIGHT: The experimental bomber unit VB/88 under Oblt. Rudolf Freiherr von Moreau joined the Condor Legion late in 1936. It was equipped initially with four Do 17 E-1s (including 27●3), four He 111 Bs (including 25●2) and four Ju 86s. All carried the standard Luftwaffe three colour uppersurface camouflage scheme.

July 1936-March 1939

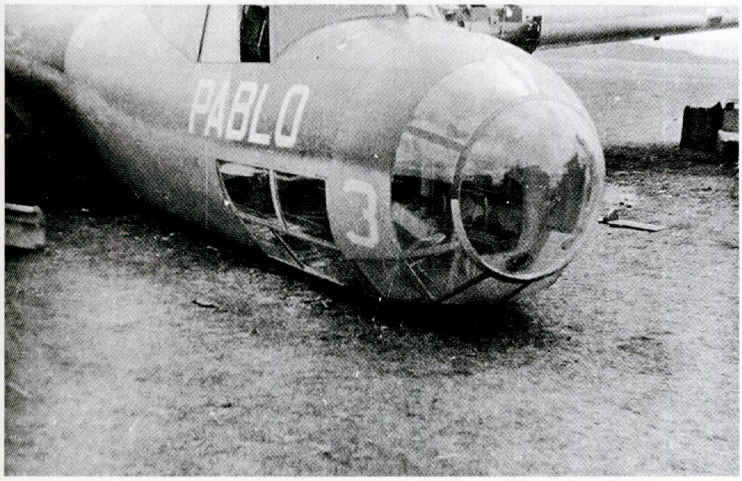
RIGHT: A few Do 17 P-1 reconnaissance aircraft were transferred to the Spanish Nationalist Air Force which painted a white Falangist symbol on the black fuselage national insignia.

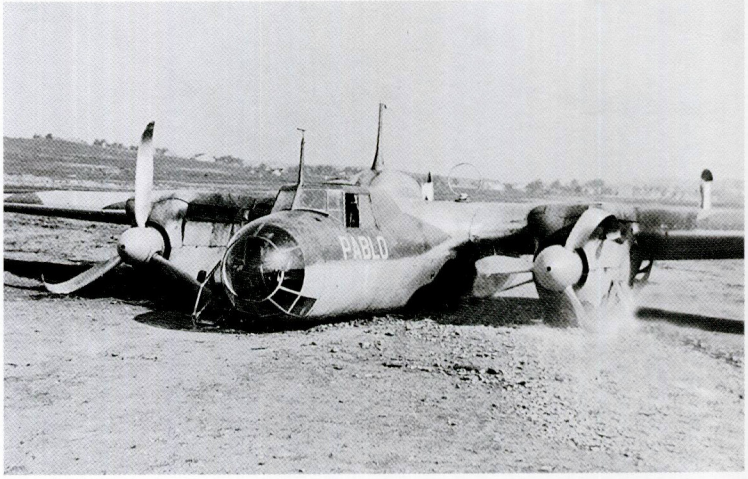




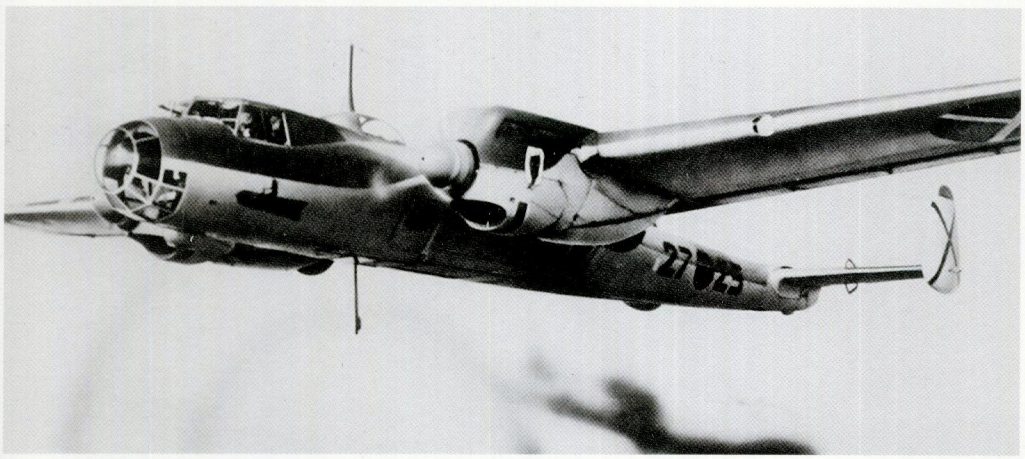
LEFT AND BELOW LEFT: The first Ju 52/3m bombers to operate in Spain had the names 'PEDRO' or 'PABLO' painted in white on their noses. These names were later applied to the first Do 17 E-1s to arrive in Spain late in 1936. PABLO 3 suffered a belly landing early in its career (*below left*).

BELOW: Retractable undercarriages were still a novelty in 1936 as shown by another Do 17 E-1, PABLO 1, which also suffered a belly landing. It is not known whether the undercarriage actually collapsed on this aircraft or the pilot simply forgot to extend his wheels.



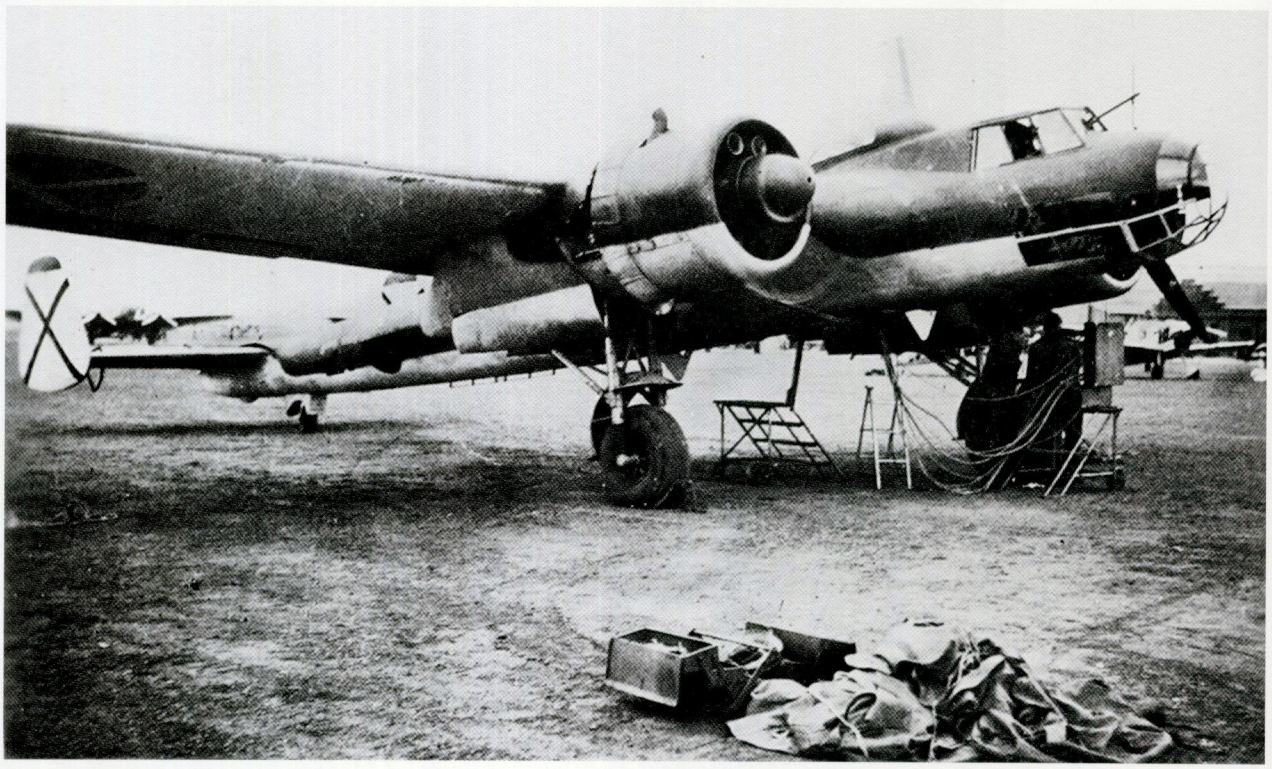


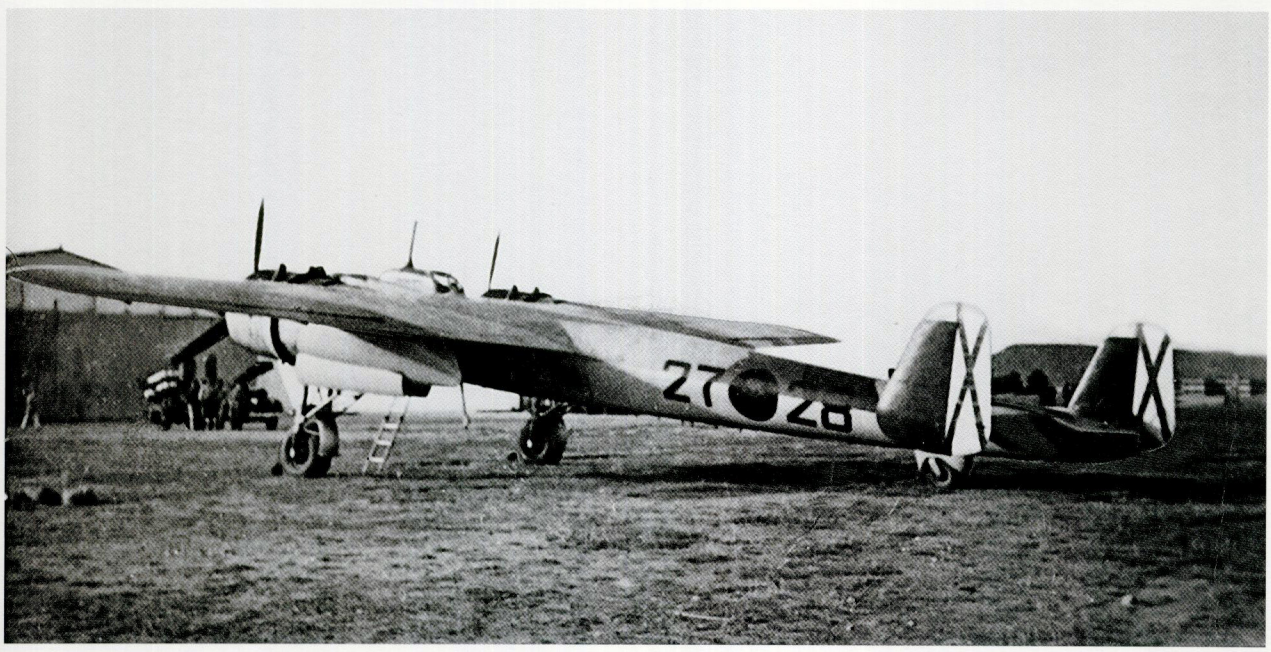
July 1936-March 1939



LEFT: Several of the Do 17s originally delivered to K/88 in Spain were transferred to A/88 for reconnaissance duties. This aircraft, 27●25, carries the bearded devil badge of the reconnaissance unit on the outer surfaces of both engine cowlings, with the crew's individual insignia comprising a devil riding a bomb on the fuselage nose.

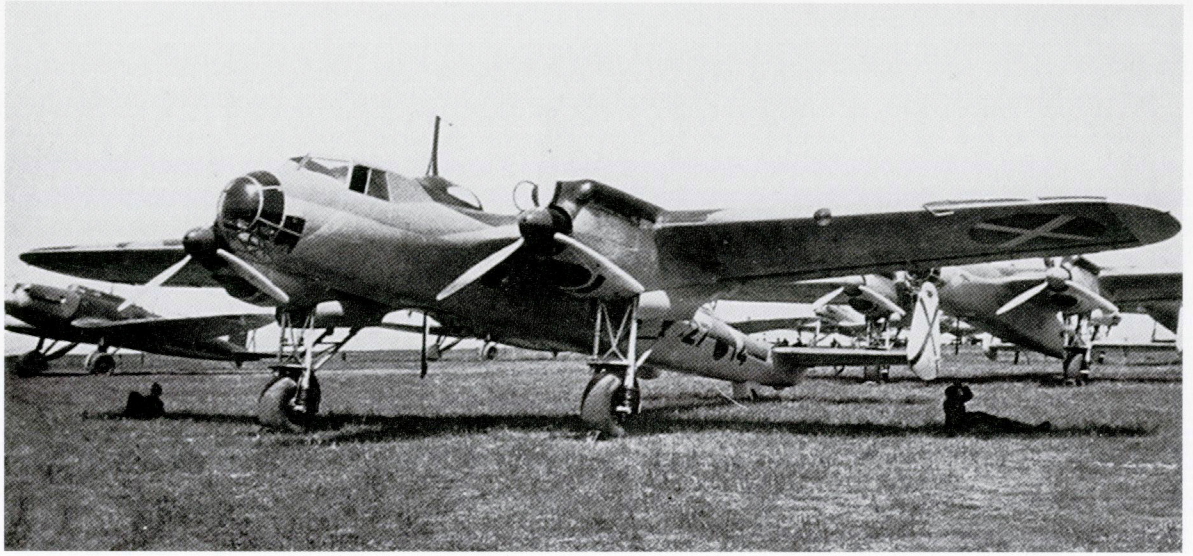
RIGHT: While the engines of a Do 17 are tested, other stalwarts of the Condor Legion can be seen in the background including an early He 111 to the left and Jumo-engined Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighter at right. All Nationalist aircraft operating in Spain had the black and white national insignia similar to those illustrated here.

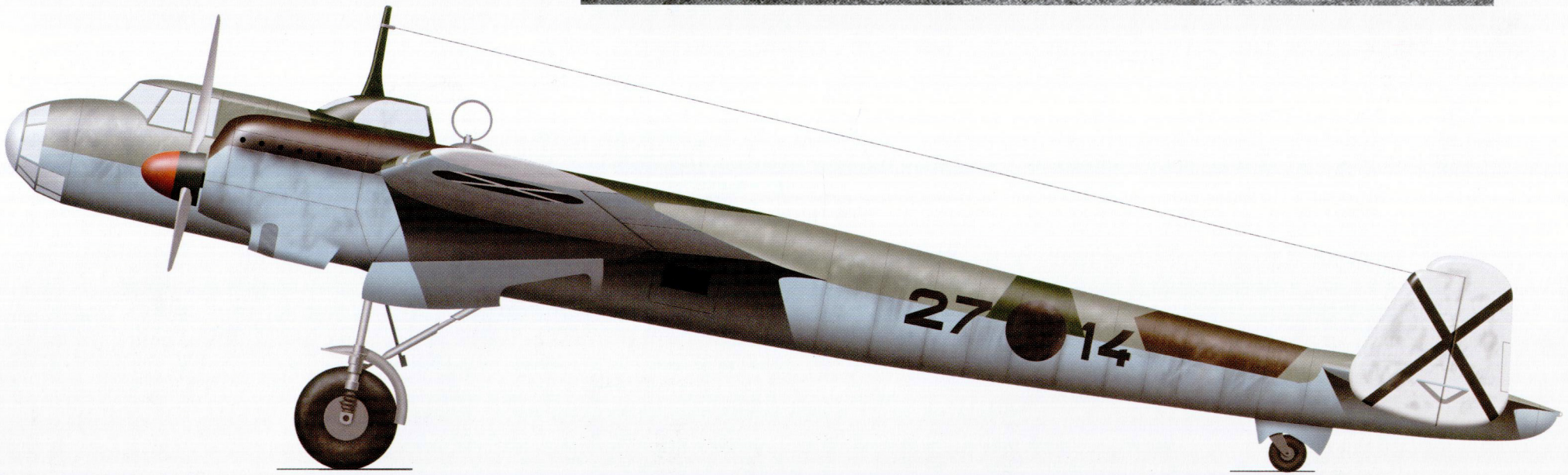




LEFT: This Do 17 P-1 reconnaissance aircraft of A/88 photographed in Spain carries the standard Luftwaffe camouflage scheme of the period with the Condor Legion code 27●28 in black on both sides of the fuselage. A/88 often operated with K/88 on bombing sorties.

RIGHT: Two Do 17 E-1s of VB/88 photographed in Spain during the summer of 1937 with an He 70 reconnaissance aircraft of A/88 in the background. The aircraft in the foreground has dark green and red spinners.





Dornier Do 17 E-1 of VB/88, summer 1937

After being tested by VB/88 in Spain, the Do 17s were handed over to the reconnaissance *Staffel*, A/88, and were later joined by several Do 17 Fs and Ps. Like all Nationalist aircraft operating during the Spanish Civil War, the aircraft had its own identification number, in this case '27'. Both sides of the fins and rudders were painted white with black diagonal crosses.

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This problem resulted in von Moreau returning to Germany in December 1936 where he formed an experimental bomber unit, *Versuchsbomberstaffel* VB/88, equipped with the latest bomber types: four He 111 Bs, four Ju 86 Ds and four Do 17 Es. Early in 1937 VB/88 joined K/88, its aircraft being assembled at Tablada airfield near Seville. A period of working up followed with the *Staffel* flying its first operation on 9 March when He 111s attacked Republican airfields in support of the Italian offensive north-east of Madrid.

The first Ju 52s and He 111s to arrive in Spain retained their overall pale grey (RLM 63) finish, but this was replaced by standard *Luftwaffe* scheme of dark brown (61), medium green (62) and pale grey (63) upper surfaces with pale blue (65) beneath. Condor Legion aircraft had their *Balkenkreuz* national insignia replaced by black discs, solid on the fuselage sides, but over-painted with a white diagonal cross on the upper and lower surfaces of the wings. The rudders of the Legion's aircraft were painted white with a black diagonal cross. Black numbers were painted on either side of the fuselage national insignia, those forward indicating the aircraft type. The numbers allocated to bomber types began with the number '2' and were as follows:

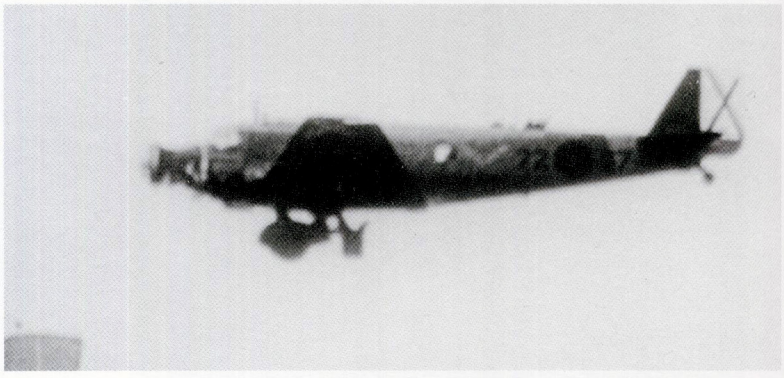
20 Fokker F.VII and F.XII
21 Savoia-Marchetti S.M. 81
22 Junkers Ju 52/3m
23 Fiat BR-20
24 Henschel Hs 123
25 Heinkel He 111
26 Junkers Ju 86 D
27 Dornier Do 17
28 Savoia-Marchetti S.M. 79
29 Junkers Ju 87

The number positioned aft of the national insignia indicated the aircraft's numerical position within the sequence for that type. For example, '22●7' was the seventh Ju 52 supplied to the Legion.

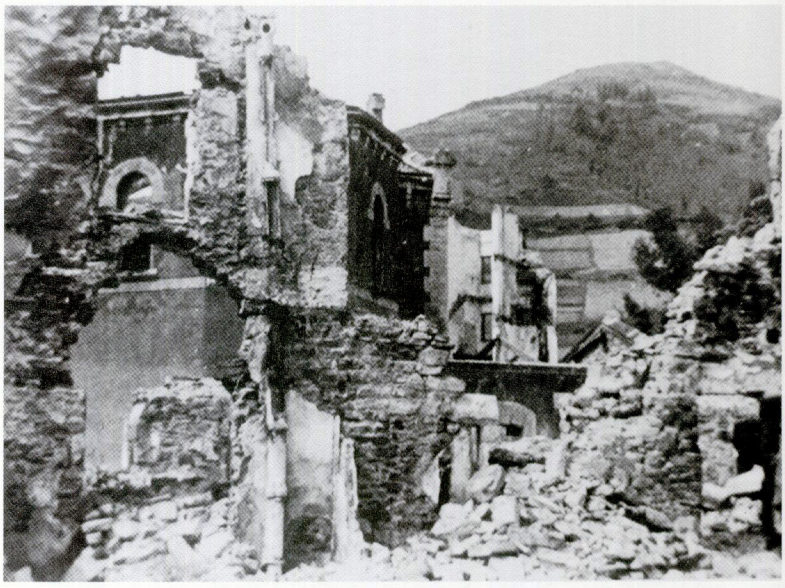
On 23 February 1937, the first example of a modern German bomber type was lost in Spain when a Ju 86 D was shot down near Andujar. Three of its crew were killed, the other taken prisoner. As in Germany, the Ju 86 suffered constant problems with its Diesel engines, and was gradually phased out of service. Operations continued with the other three aircraft types and, by 21 March 1937, the Condor Legion had dropped no less than a thousand tonnes of bombs.

The Condor Legion moved to Vitoria and Burgos airfields on 21 March for action in support of Nationalist troops advancing on Bilbao in the north of Spain. For these operations the personnel of K/88 now equipped with 16 Ju 52s and VB/88 with six He 111s and Do 17s, were housed in specially equipped railway trains. Soon afterwards the *Staffeln* began a series of intensive attacks on the road and rail junction at Durango, helping to block the retreat of Republican troops towards Bilbao. The first Do 17 losses occurred on 18 April when the aircraft piloted by *Oblt.* Hans Sobotka of VB/88 was shot down by an I-15 near Bilbao.

As operations proceeded, the Legion's pilots were ordered by *Oberst* Wolfram Freiherr von Richthofen, their Chief of Staff, to disregard the civilian population in the interests of an uninterrupted advance. As he said to General Emilio Mola, commander of the Nationalist forces on the northern front: "nothing is unreasonable that can further destroy enemy morale and quickly." This order was to result in one of the most notorious events of the Spanish Civil War, the destruction of the Basque town of Guernica by German bombers. To this day much controversy surrounds this action. The Germans claim that they were attempting to bomb the Renteria bridge across the River Mundaca east of the town, and that the early attacks threw up so much smoke and dust clouds that the following aircraft were forced to bomb blind. The choice of light incendiaries as well as high explosive bombs to destroy such a target was, however, an odd



BELOW: The first bomber sorties flown by the bomber unit, K/88, in Spain were made using converted Ju 52/3ms similar to these aircraft shown here. The semi-retractable ventral 'dustbin' gun position is clearly visible in this photograph.



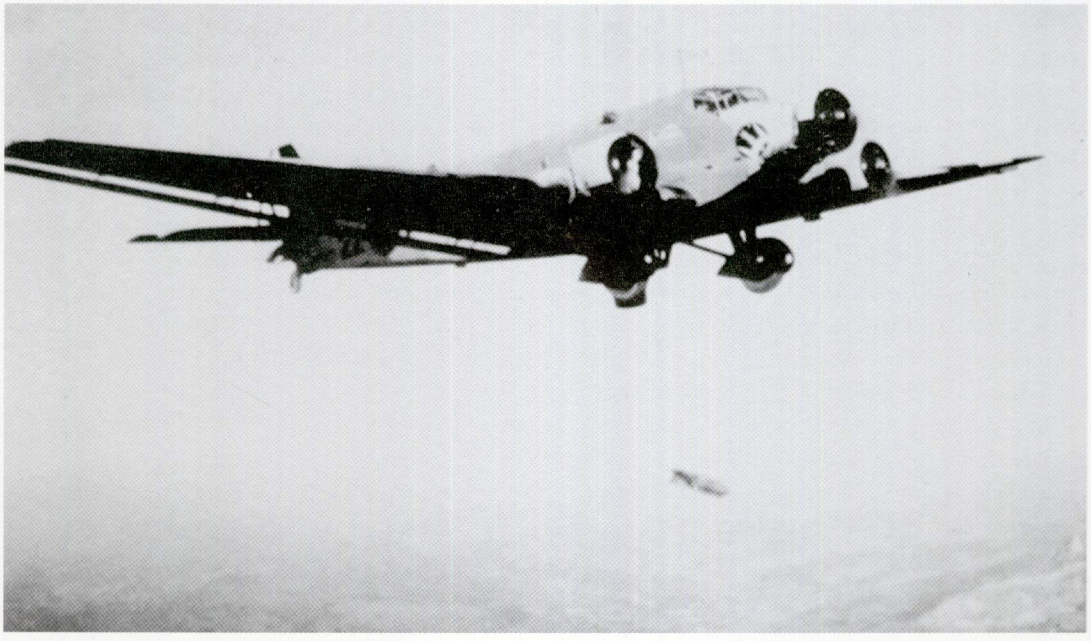
ABOVE: Wolfram Freiherr von Richthofen (standing in the foreground with binoculars) watches as his bombers fly an operation. A cousin of the famous 'Red Baron' Manfred von Richthofen, he served as a fighter pilot in the First World War, and was credited with eight victories. After the war, he gained a Doctorate in engineering, and eventually transferred to the new Luftwaffe in 1933. In 1936 he was appointed Chief of Staff to the Condor Legion, but following several disagreements with its commander, Hugo Sperrle, he returned to Germany. Von Richthofen was to become one of the great advocates of the dive bomber, leading the VIII.Fliegerkorps from July 1939 to June 1942 through Poland, the West, the Balkans and Russia.

one. Others claim that the attack was a deliberate attempt to damage Republican morale, and in this they succeeded. Whatever the truth, there is no doubt that the bridge was not hit by a single bomb and that some 1,600 civilians [1] were killed and the town razed to the ground.

The bombers of K/88 and VB/88 continued to concentrate on assisting in the capture of Bilbao which finally fell to Nationalist forces on 12 June 1937. They then switched their effort towards Santander for a few days until, on 6 July, a report came that Republican forces were attempting to break out from the Madrid area, which was then surrounded by the Nationalists. By this time, VB/88 was wholly equipped with the He 111, its Do 17 Es having being handed over to the reconnaissance unit A/88. Based at Salamanca and Avila, the three bomber *Staffeln* of K/88 plus VB/88 were constantly engaged in attacking Republican columns near Brunete 24 km (15 miles) to the west of Madrid. Their first massed bombing raid came on 8 July and the area around Brunete rapidly resembled a ploughed field. Villages in the area, packed with Republican troops, were also heavily bombed. On 18 July the Nationalists were ready to launch a counter-offensive, the bombers of the Condor Legion repeating their tactics of dropping their bombs directly in front of the attacking troops.

In August the Condor Legion returned to the northern front, K/88 now having a strength of 18 Ju 52s and 14 He 111s. Early operations by the unit included the flying of diversionary attacks against Santander to distract Republican Ratas from strafing Nationalist positions. The ground assault on

ABOVE: The ruins of the Basque town of Guernica which was heavily damaged on 26 April 1937 by the bombers of VB/88 and K/88. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the operation, the name of Guernica was to become synonymous with indiscriminate bombing and later formed the subject of one of Picasso's most famous paintings.



LEFT: A Junkers Ju 52/3m g3e bomber of 3.K/88 releases a 250 kg (550 lb) bomb over Spain. The unit's Ju 52s had overall pale grey finish with the exception of the undercarriage and the front section of the engine cowlings. The emblem of the 3.Staffel, a white stylised diving eagle on a black circle, was painted on the nose.

1 German sources say 300.

July 1936-March 1939

Santander began on 14 August and the city fell to Franco's troops on the 25th. Meanwhile, on the 23rd, K/88 had flown its first sortie against targets in Asturia and its capital, Gijon, and in this raid, as with others flown subsequently, the bombers were escorted by the Bf 109s of 2.J/88. In early September, K/88 moved to airfields around Santander and the Legion spent several days softening enemy resistance by striking communications and troop concentrations. Gijon eventually fell on 21 October, and by the end of the six-week campaign K/88 had dropped no fewer than 2,500 tonnes of bombs, sank a destroyer, the *Ciscar*, and a 735 ton coaster.

ABOVE: Generalmajor Hellmuth Volkmann took over command of the Condor Legion from Hugo Sperrle on 1 November 1937. He constantly pressed for the Legion's withdrawal from Spain and was replaced by Wolfram von Richthofen in December 1938. He was killed in a car accident on 21 August 1940 while leading an Infantry Division in France.

The period of rest and recuperation which followed, in November 1937, enabled K/88 to be completely re-equipped with He 111s. On the first of the month the abrasive *Generalmajor* Sperrle was replaced as commander of the Condor Legion by *Generalmajor* Hellmuth Volkmann, and *Oberst* Hermann Plocher took over from von Richthofen as Chief of Staff in January 1938.

The elimination of Republican forces in the north enabled Franco to turn his attention to a renewed attack on Madrid. Late in November K/88 began to carry out raids on Republican airfields around the capital, Guadalajara and Bujaraloz in an attempt to neutralise any Republican aerial threat. On 4 December the He 111s dropped 30 tons of bombs on Bujaraloz airfield with the Bf 109s of J/88 being heavily engaged in protecting them from Republican fighters. Intense aerial battles followed during the next few days and, on 16 December, Republican troops broke through the Nationalist lines and surrounded the town of Teruel. Next day 23 He 111s from K/88 bombed the enemy positions but bad weather caused their formation to scatter. Conditions were now horrendous for both sides with temperatures as low as minus 17 degrees C (1.5 degrees F) and heavy snow on the ground. Despite this, K/88 managed to drop almost 100 tonnes of bombs on Republican positions on 30 December but these attacks were unable to prevent the loss of Teruel on 8 January 1938. Right through January and February, Republican positions in and around the town remained the main target for K/88's bombers, until its ruined streets were finally retaken on 21 February.

Franco then decided to change the direction of his assault, planning to advance east across the Ebro river towards the Mediterranean coast on 9 March. Three days prior to the attack, 18 He 111 Es from K/88 bombed Bujaraloz airfield destroying four aircraft on the ground while another 16 aircraft struck Caspe, setting a fuel dump on fire. In the afternoon, nine He 111s bombed the Republican divisional headquarters at Aldehuele and during the next two days the Heinkels of K/88, joined by the Do 17s of A/88, bombed the railway station at Puebla de Jijar and a munitions factory further north. On the day of the attack itself, the *Gruppe* flew concentrated sorties against roads and troop positions, dropping 210 tonnes of bombs which effectively neutralised any Republican opposition. Next day, K/88 flew a number of raids on Republican airfields but, during one of these, the He 111 B, coded 25●7, was shot down by an I-15. *Lt.* Kurt Kettner and his crew were taken prisoner. [2]

Initially Nationalist ground forces were able to carry out an uninterrupted advance, reaching Caspe on the Ebro river on 17 March, but then Republican resistance began to stiffen. To counter this, the Nationalists changed their tactics, advancing on a much broader front, thus dispersing the enemy's resistance. Spreading themselves over a 250 km (155 mile) front from Teruel to the Pyrenees, Franco's forces, supported by the entire Condor Legion, struck westwards towards the Mediterranean on 22 March. The attack began with a strike by K/88 against forward troops positions and lines of communication and, in the days that followed, the *Gruppe* was heavily engaged. At this time its commanders were:

Major Karl Mehnert	*Kommandeur* of K/88
Hptm. Hans Schultz	*Kapitän* of 1.Staffel
Oblt. Rolf Schröter	*Kapitän* of 2.*Staffel*
Hptm. Heinz Fischer	*Kapitän* of 3.*Staffel*
Hptm. Dietrich von Ziehlberg	*Kapitän* of 4.*Staffel* (the new designation of VB/88)

As intensive operations by K/88 continued, two of its He 111s collided over their base at Alfaro, one of the aircraft crashing in flames killing the crew of *Lt.* Herbert Hoyer.

2 Kettner later became a fighter pilot and was killed on 25 August 1944 when serving as Kommandeur of II./JG 5.

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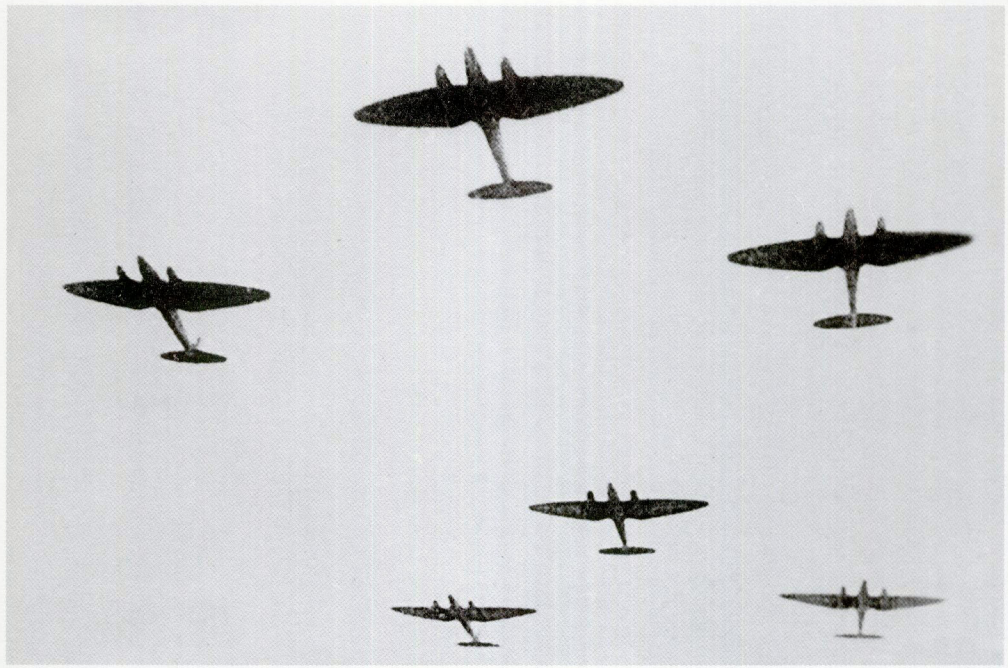
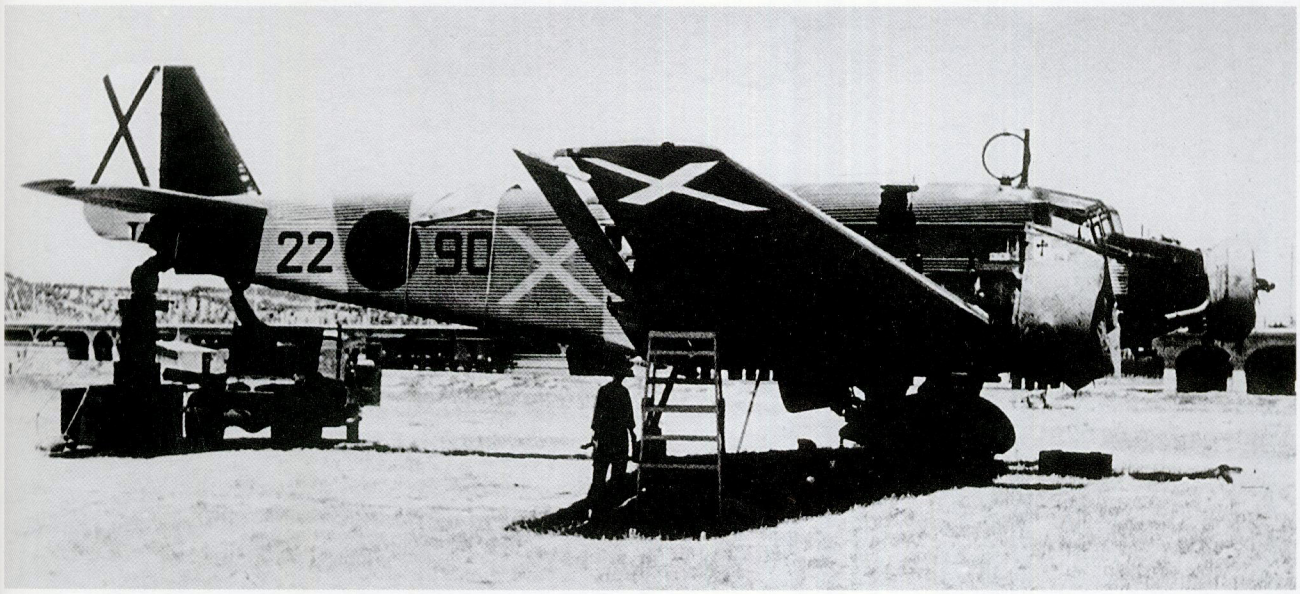
RIGHT: Two Ketten or flights of three He 111s over Spain. These are either of the B or E-version which had curved leading edges to their wings.





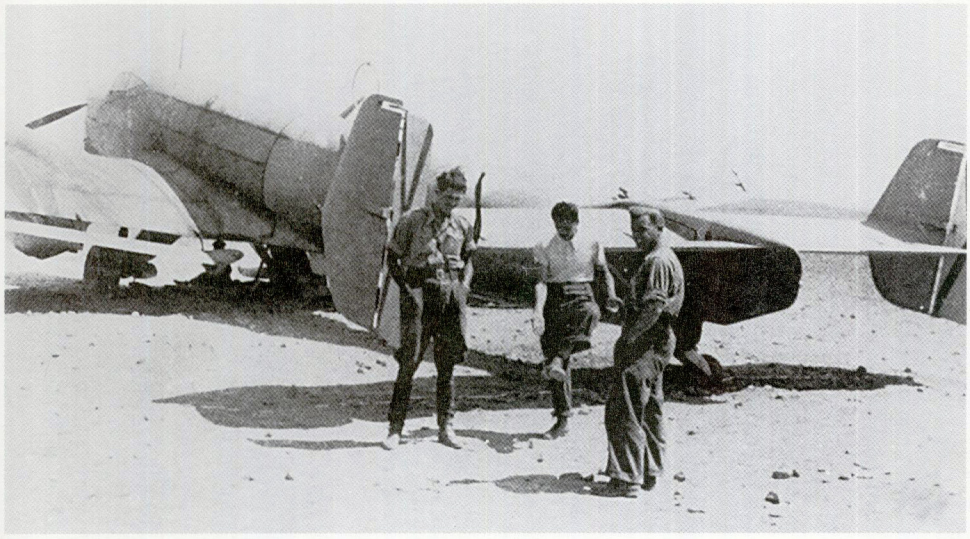
LEFT: A later version of the 'Tante Ju' ('Auntie Ju'), the Ju 52/3mg4e, was also used in Spain. This was easily distinguishable by its tailwheel rather than the tailskid of the earlier model. It was powered by two 660 hp BMW 132 A engines and had a reinforced cargo floor.

On 17 April some *Staffeln* of K/88 re-equipped with the new DB 600-powered He 111 J and transferred to Seville-Tablada airfield in the south to take part in 'Operation Neptun,' a concentrated attack against Republican naval forces in the ports of Cartagena and Almeria. During the transfer, *Lt.* Kruschbersky's crew was killed when their He 111 suffered engine trouble and crashed near Monasterio. Neptun began with an attack by 34 Heinkels on Cartagena followed by a second strike, by 25 aircraft, during the late afternoon. Although 82 tonnes of bombs were dropped, one of which damaged the repaired cruiser *Jamie I*, one He 111 (25●27) was shot down by anti-aircraft fire and another (25●15) badly damaged. Next day the *Gruppe* returned to Alfaro.

The Nationalists now turned their attentions towards Valencia, K/88 bombing the city of Catellon de la Plana and Sagunto harbour on 25 April. Bad weather caused many aircraft to become bogged down in deep mud and prevented many operations by the Legion at this time although, on 5 May, K/88 did manage to carry out two heavy attacks on Republican troops south of Vinaroz. During the middle of May, K/88 transferred from Alfaro to Sanjuro, nearer the front, and improved conditions allowed some further operations to be flown.

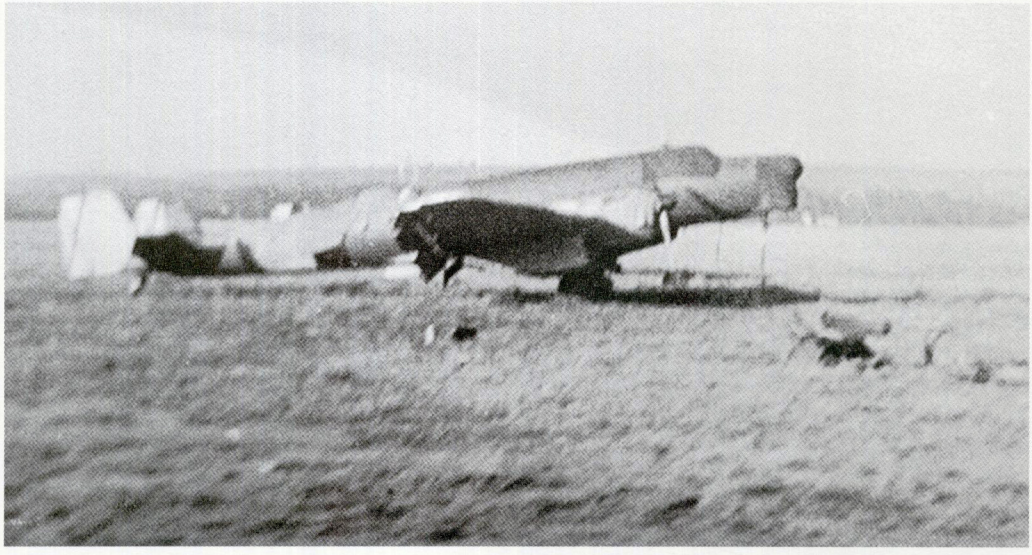
On 9 June K/88 bombed roads and troop positions in the Adzaneta area where Republican forces were mounting stiff opposition to the Nationalist advance. Three days later the *Gruppe* attempted to disrupt enemy road traffic south of the city of Castellon, and on 13 June, six Heinkels were damaged by Republican fighters, two of them only just managing to return to La Cenia. In this, like many other

July 1936-March 1939

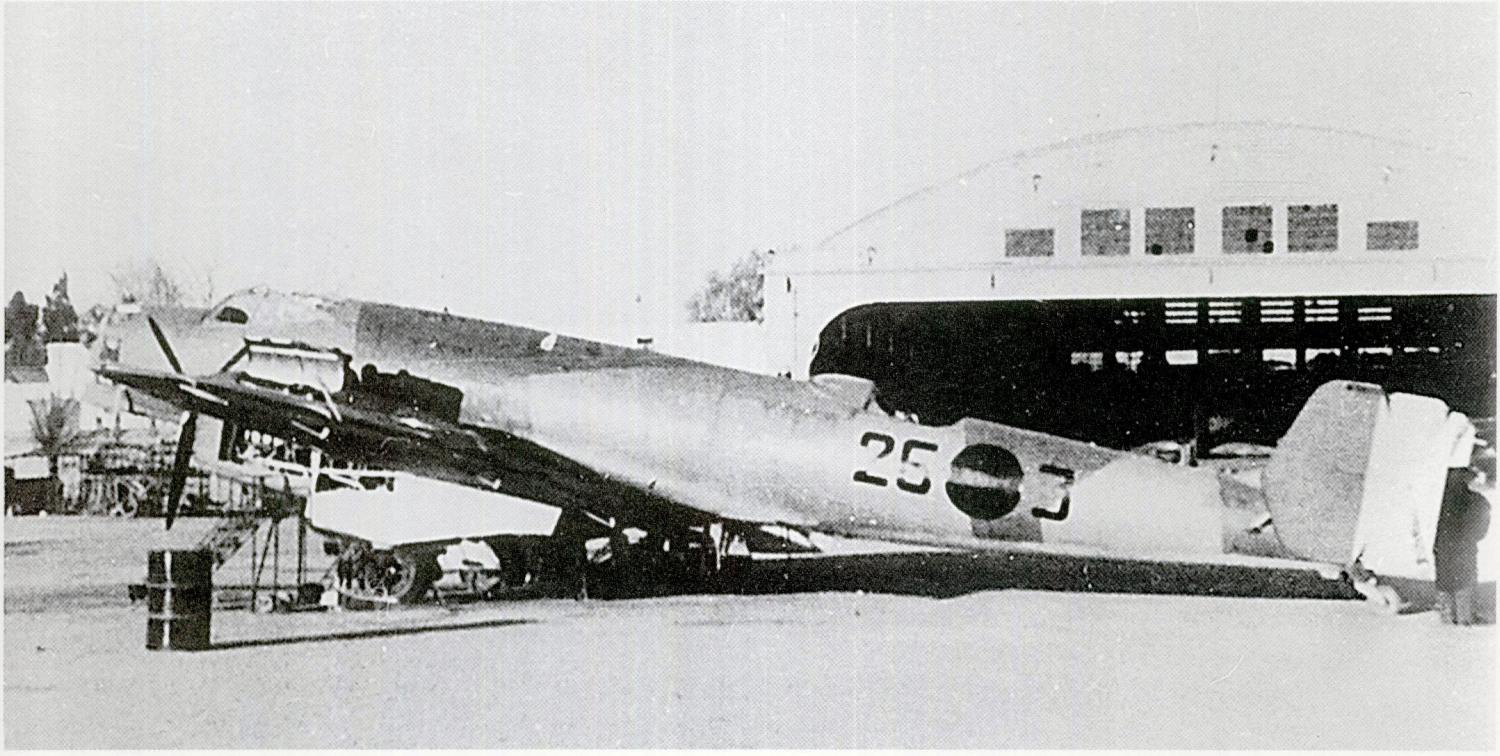


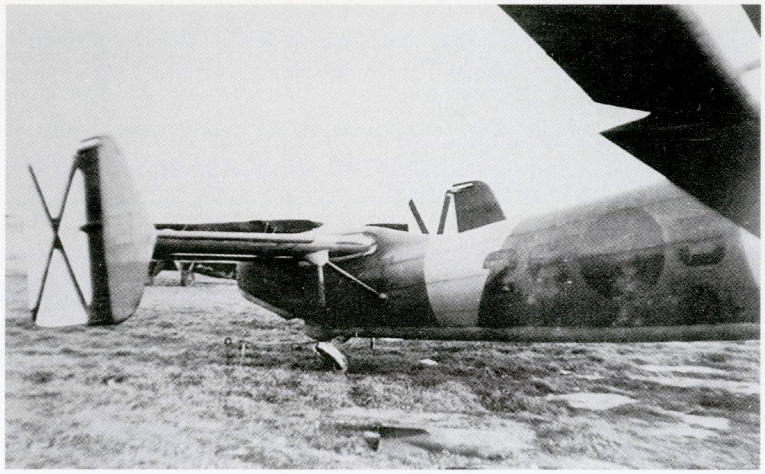
LEFT: Some Spanish and German personnel idle away some time at the rear of this Ju 86 D. Although the Ju 86 was sent to Spain the aircraft was not extensively used operationally.

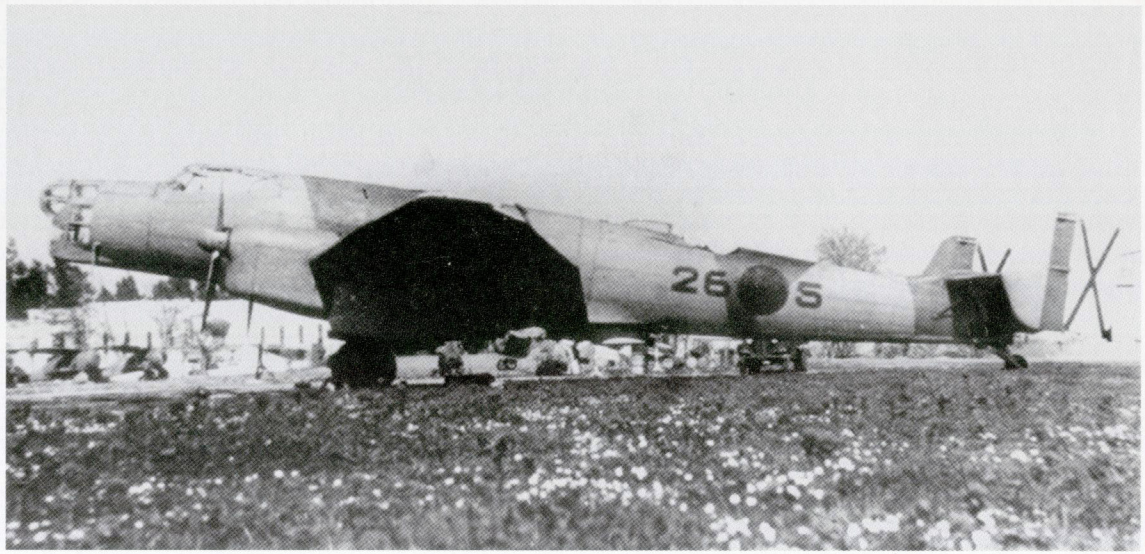
BELOW: When the Ju 86 D-1 was parked on an airfield between missions, special protective sheets were placed over the cockpit and gun positions to protect it from the weather.



BELOW: The port side engine is being serviced on this Ju 86 26●3 which was one of the longest serving aircraft of this type in the Spanish Civil War.





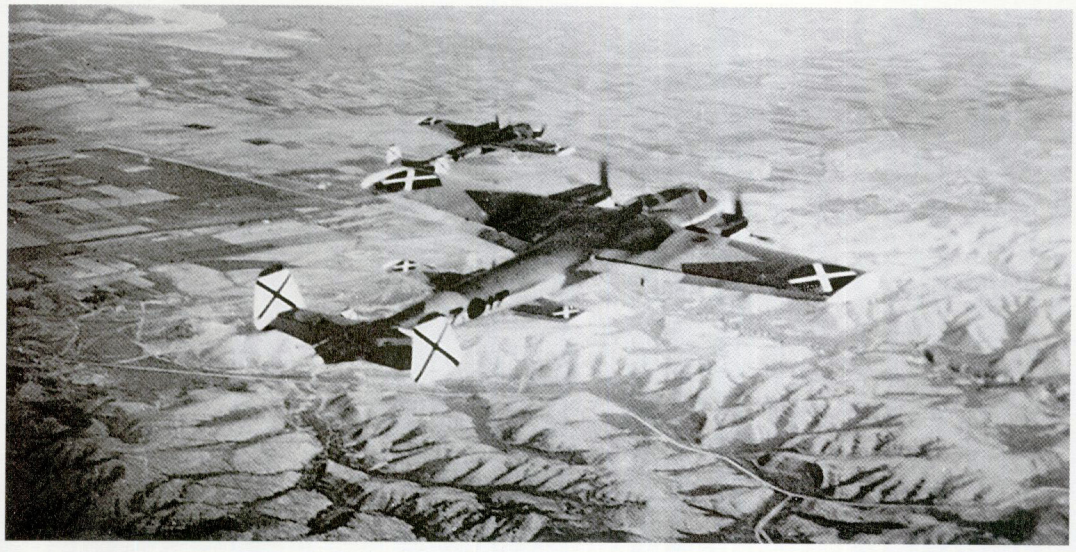


ABOVE LEFT AND ABOVE: Relatively few Ju 86 Ds were delivered to VB/88 because it was soon realised that the chronic unreliability of its Diesel engines rendered it a liability, especially in the operational conditions encountered in Spain. The Spanish aircraft code '26' was allocated to the aircraft, this machine, 26●5 being the fifth and last delivered to the Condor Legion.

Junkers Ju 86 D-1 of VB/88, early 1937

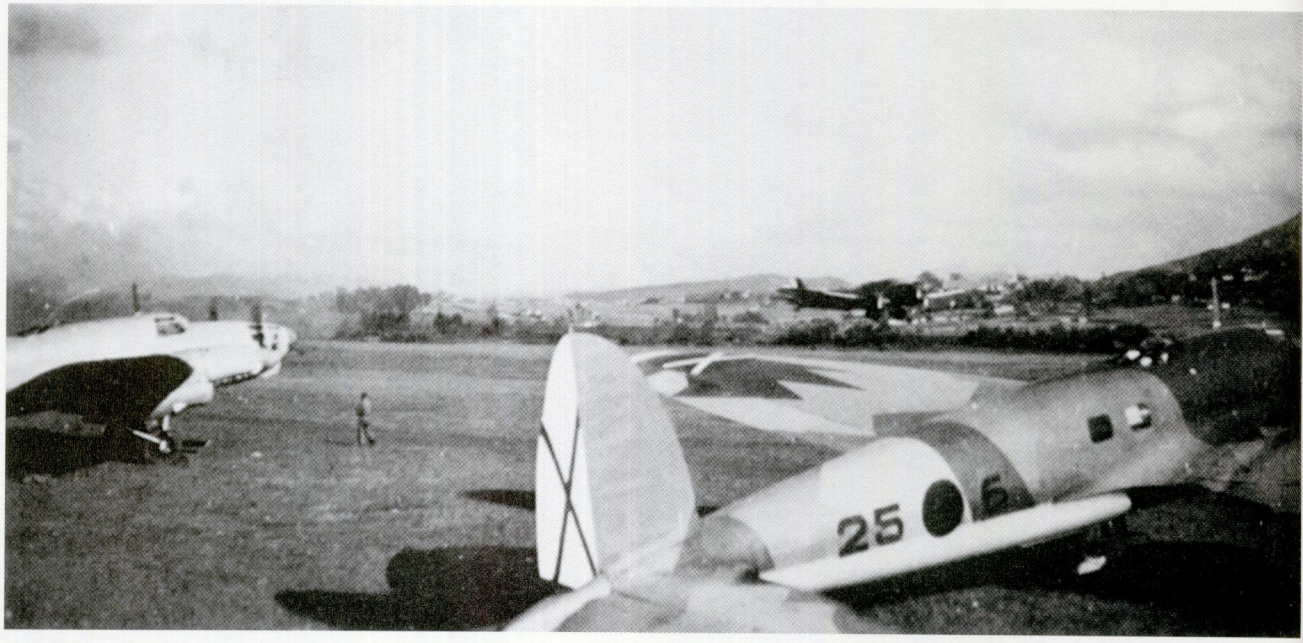
Late in 1936 *Hptm.* Rudolf Freiherr von Moreau formed a special experimental *Versuchsbomberstaffel* known as VB/88. It was equipped with the latest bomber types – the He 111 B, Do 17 E, and Ju 86 D. The unit became operational at Tablada in Spain in March 1937. Most of its aircraft carried the three-colour camouflage in widespread use by the *Luftwaffe* at this time although some He 111s were delivered in pale grey overall. Operations with the Ju 86 were to substantiate the difficulties already experienced in Germany with the unreliability of its Diesel engines, and only five aircraft, the last of which is illustrated here, were delivered.

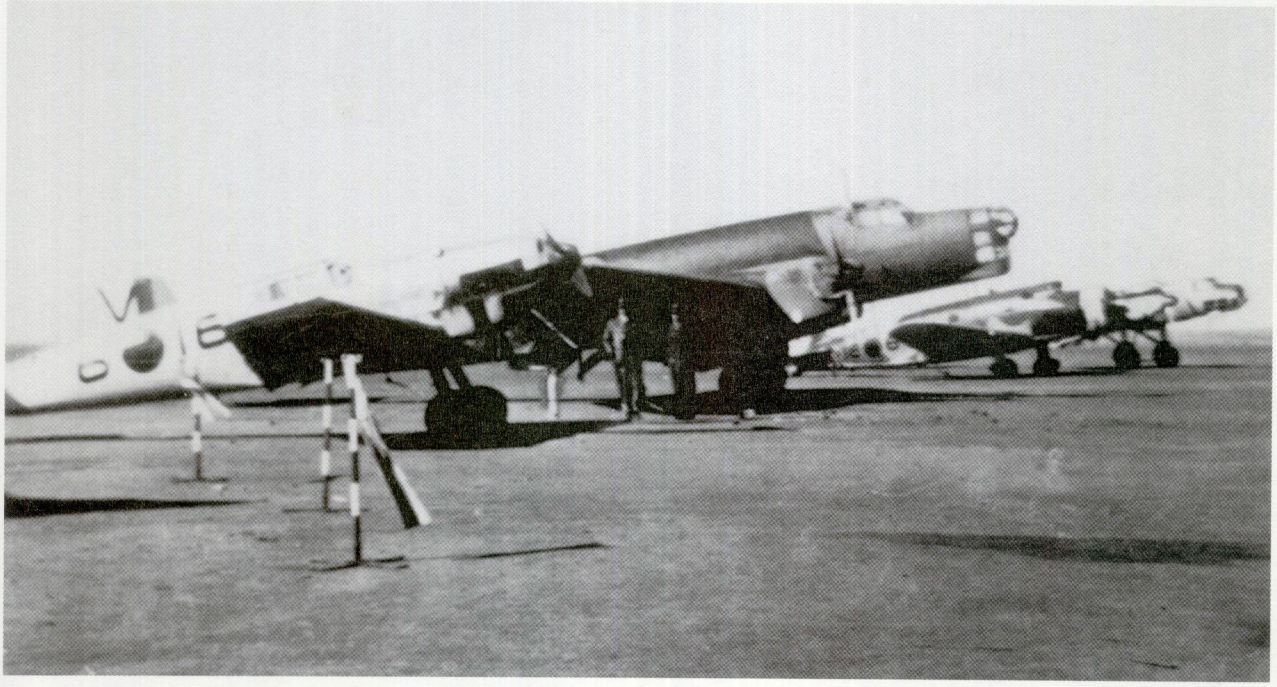
July 1936-March 1939



LEFT: A flight of three Do 17 Es of VB/88 in flight over mountains in Spain. These aircraft carry the standard Luftwaffe camouflage of the period with Spanish Nationalist national insignia. The wing tips were painted white.

BELOW: Two early He 111 Bs of VB/88 stand idle at Burgos airfield in Spain as a Ju 86 D comes in to land in the background. It is interesting to note the differences in the paint schemes of the two Heinkels. The aircraft at left is in overall pale grey while that in the foreground, 25●6, has the early-type Luftwaffe camouflage of 61, 62 and 63.





LEFT: A line-up of various Nationalist aircraft types photographed at León airfield. Nearest the camera is a Messerschmitt Bf 109 B-1, 6●16 of 2.J/88 with a Ju 86 D of VB/88 behind. Next to this is a captured Vultee V-1A transport with a Do 17 E of VB/88 in the background. The Bf 109s of J/88 performed valuable escort duties for the Condor Legion bombers.

operations, the bombers were escorted by the Bf 109s of J/88 which claimed the destruction of six I-15 Chatos and two I-16 Ratas in this action. On 5 July, K/88 bombed lines of communication on the approaches to Valencia and two days later attempted to destroy Republican defensive positions in the mountains of the Sierra de Espadan.

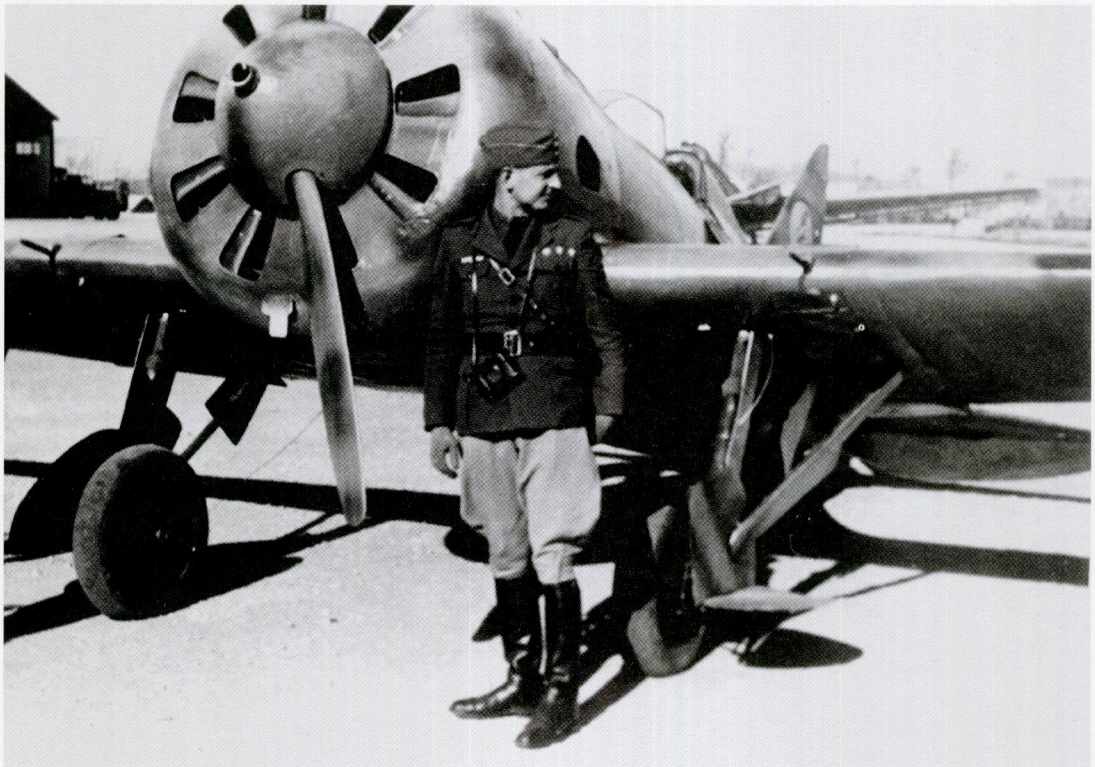
To the surprise of Franco's forces, the Republicans launched a relief offensive during the night of 24/25 July 1938, crossing the Ebro and establishing several bridgeheads. To counter this offensive, K/88 launched a series of attacks on the footbridges over the river and on enemy troop concentrations. During one of the latter, on 30 July, poor navigation led to a number of He 111s releasing their bombs on Nationalist troops. Fortunately, however, the troops were well dug in and suffered no casualties. On 14 August, nine He 111s from 1.K/88 under *Hptm.* Heyse and 12 He 111s from 2.K/88 under *Hptm.* Wolfien attacked a bridge south of Mora la Neuva, hitting the target several times.

It was not until 16 November that Nationalist forces finally managed to regain the whole area temporarily occupied by the Republicans. Returning to action on 26 November with strikes on the Ebro Front, K/88's navigation was again wayward, and this time a number of Nationalist troops were killed.

On 23 December 1938, K/88 flew its first operation in what was to prove the last major offensive in which the Condor Legion was to be involved, a strike to the north and east by Nationalist troops with the intention of taking Barcelona and the area bordering France. During the next few days the *Gruppe* was heavily committed, preventing the Republicans from establishing any coherent defence. Bad weather was then to curtail operations over the following few weeks but, on 26 January, Barcelona finally fell to Franco's forces. The next few days were involved in pursuing what remained of the Republican forces towards the Pyrenees, but heavy rainstorms restricted operations on 30 January.

From then on, the Condor Legion took little part in the war, merely flying what were described as 'practice missions' during the final days. K/88 did suffer a grievous loss on 12 March when its commander, *Hptm.* Fritz Härle, was killed when his He 111 exploded over Madrid. He was replaced by *Major.* Nielsen. K/88's last sortie came on 27 March 1939 when it flew a final mission against forward Republican positions. Early the same day a Hs 126 reconnaissance aircraft reported seeing white flags flying in the capital, and at 10.00 am, von Richthofen, now commander of the Legion, sent the long-awaited message to his squadrons: 'All German units will cease operations!'

There is no doubt that the support Germany gave to the Nationalists provided its airmen with valuable experience in the greater war to come, especially in its use of medium bombers as 'flying artillery' and of honing the dive-bomber as a potent offensive weapon. During the campaign K/88 had dropped a total of 21,045 tonnes of bombs and lost a total of 72 aircrew killed in action. In addition they had tested the aircraft which were to prove so invaluable in years that followed.



LEFT: One of the main aerial opponents of K/88 in Spain was the Russian-built Polikarpov I-16 Rata fighter. Here Oblt. Helmut-Felix Bolz of 3.J/88 poses in front of a captured I-16 at Sanjurjo/Zaragoza airfield.

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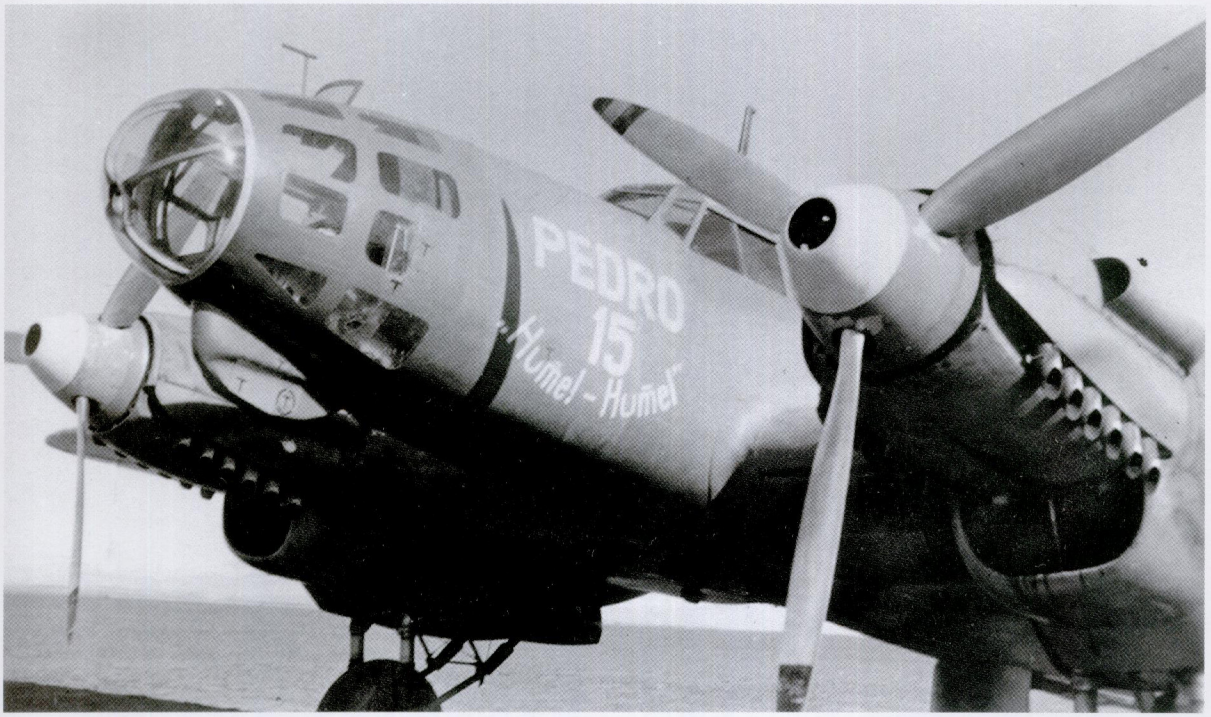
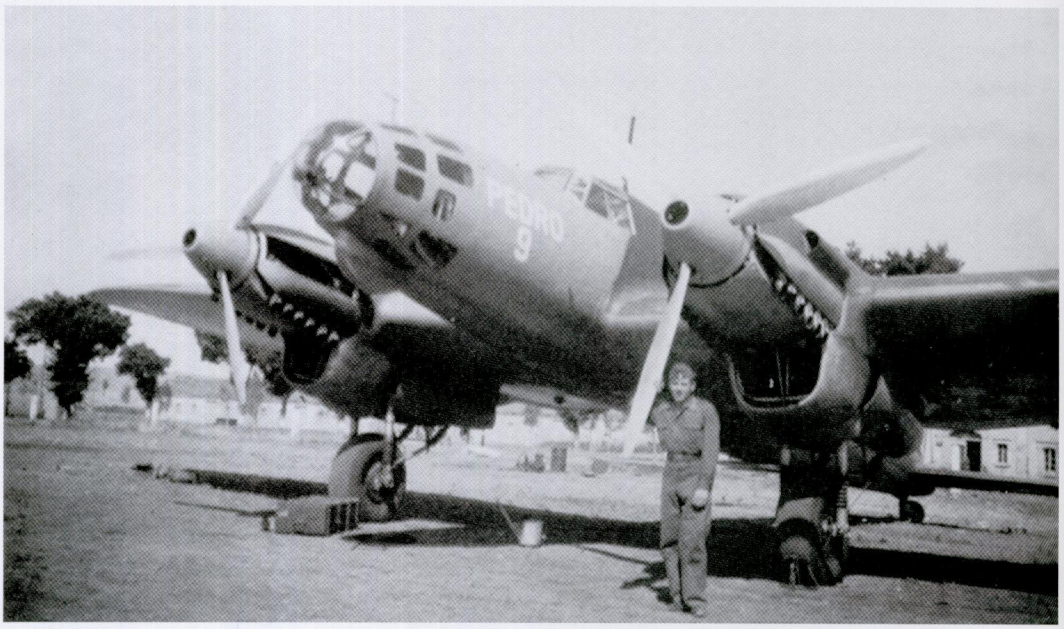
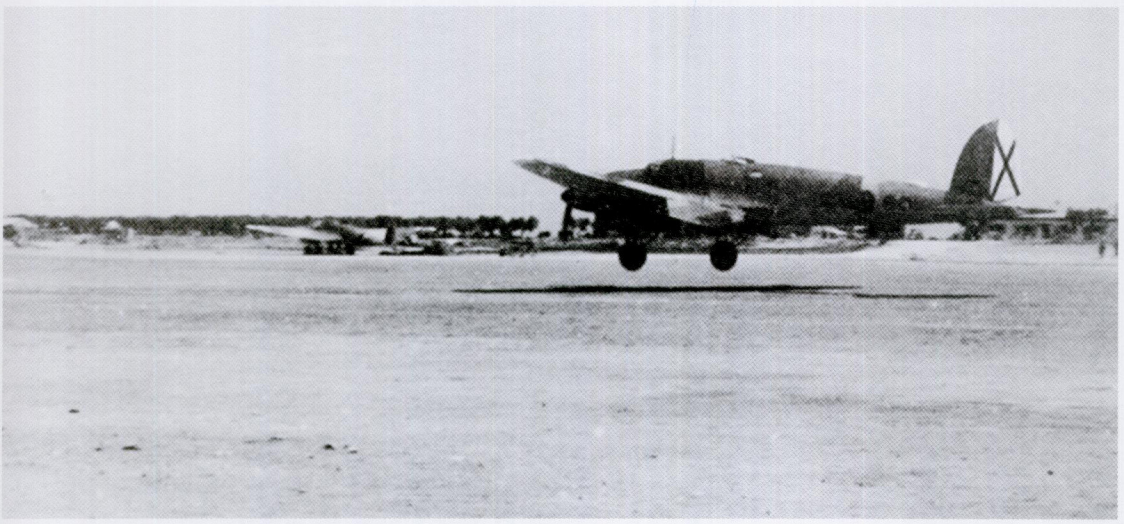


LEFT: The first bomber Ju 52/3ms that operated in Spain had the names 'PEDRO' and 'PABLO' painted on their noses. This practice continued when the first Do 17s and He 111s arrived with the Condor Legion. The highest number known to have been applied to an He 111 was on this aircraft, PEDRO 15. Below this name, also painted in white, is the nickname 'Humel – Humel' (bumble bee). The aircraft itself was painted pale grey overall, with the spinner tips in white. Note that the tips of the propellers are painted in red, natural metal and red stripes as a warning to ground personnel when the engines were being run up.



RIGHT: The names 'PABLO' and 'PEDRO' were painted on the noses of the first Ju 52/3m bombers that operated in Spain, this tradition being carried on by the experimental bomber unit VB/88. This He 111 B-1 has 'PEDRO 9' painted below its cockpit.



LEFT: During April 1938 some Staffeln of K/88 were re-equipped with the He 111 J, to take part in 'Operation Neptun,' a concentrated attack against Republican naval forces. The J variant differed in having the new wing with a straight leading edge first introduced on the F-model and DB 600 engines.

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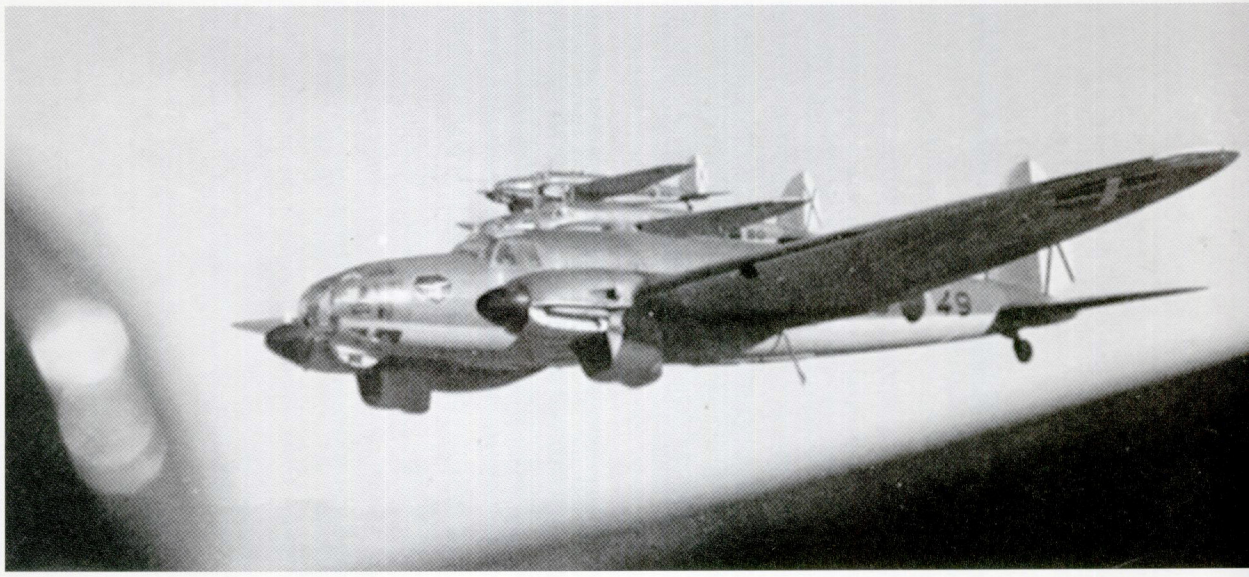
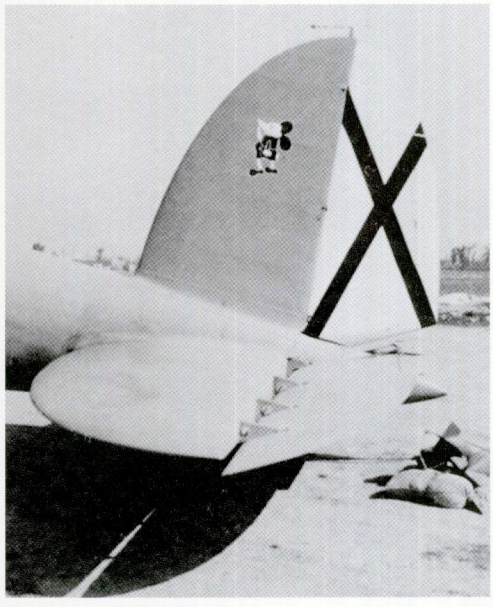
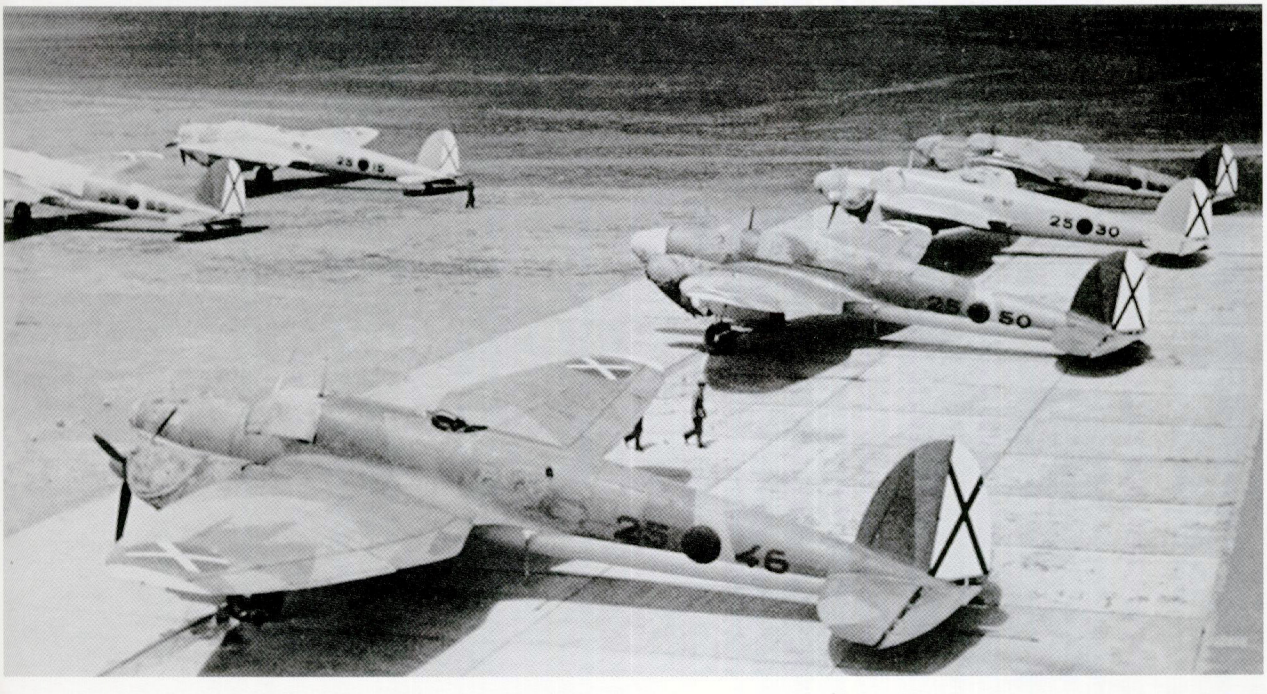
RIGHT: Three He 111 E-1s, 25●49, 25●50 and 25●52, of K/88 en route to their target at Mora la Nueva. The aircraft carry standard Nationalist insignia and have white wing tips.



RIGHT: A large variation of individual markings were carried by the aircraft of the Condor Legion in Spain. This He 111 B, piloted by Albert Schreiweis, has a small Mickey Mouse badge painted on the tail fin in black and white. The Disney character was very popular in Germany in the pre-war period and was adopted, in various forms, by many other pilots as their personal emblem

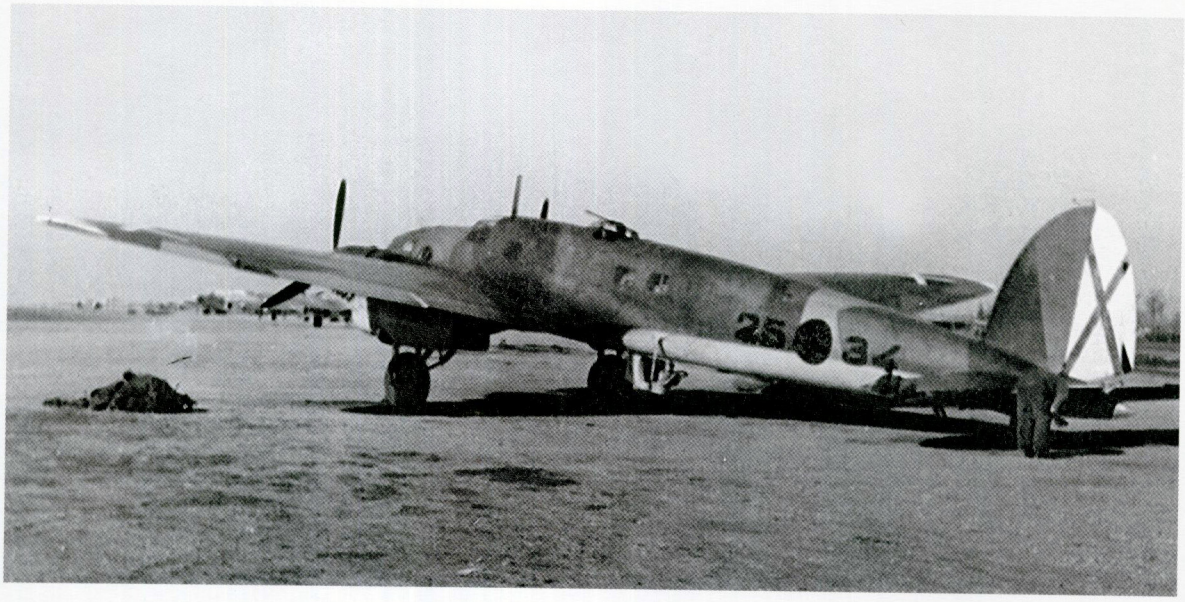


FAR RIGHT: The crew of Lt. Fuhrhop used to take their mascot, a Scottish Terrier named 'Peter', on many of their operations. Sadly, Peter was killed by a stray bullet from an I-16 during an operation on 13 June 1938 over Sagunto, and the crew painted this memorial to him on the fin of their He 111. The lower motto translates as 'In aerial combat over Sagunto.'

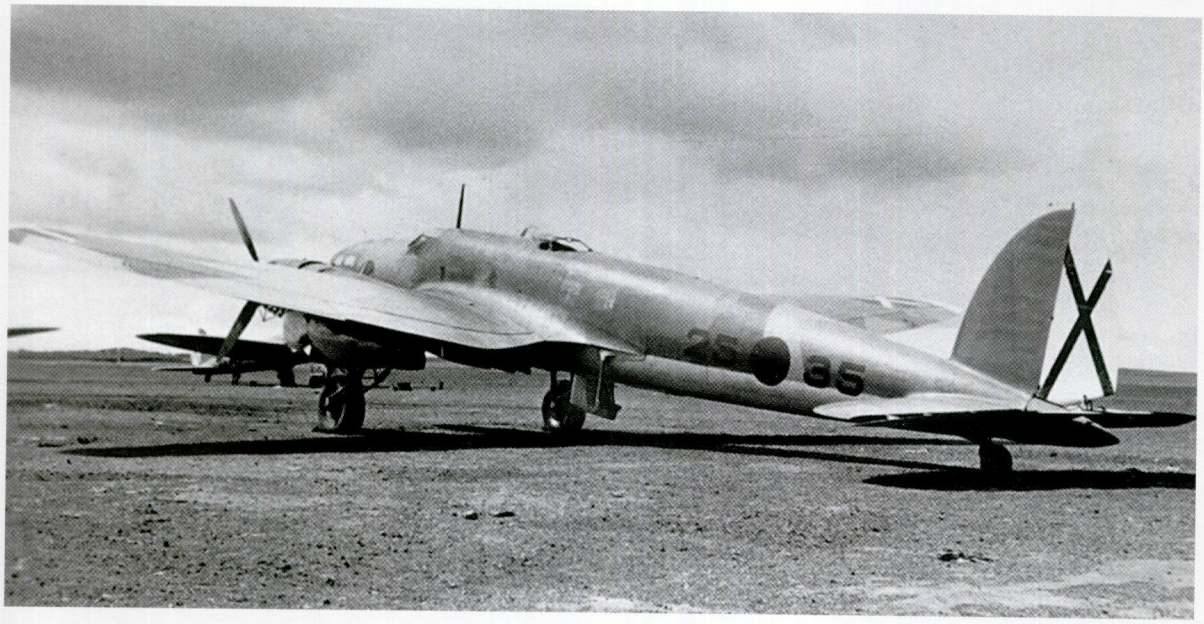


LEFT: A line-up of six He 111s of K/88 read to take part in 'Operation Neptun,' a concentrated attack against Republican naval forces in the ports of Cartagena an Almeria in April 1938. Note the variation in colour schemes, 25●46, 25●50, 25●53 and 25●52 having da brown, medium green and pale grey uppersurfaces with pale blue beneath while 25●30 and 25●15 are in overall pale grey.

July 1936-March 1939



RIGHT AND BELOW: These two He 111Bs were delivered to K/88 in Spain with the standard camouflage carried by the Luftwaffe during this period. Both aircraft, 25●34 and 25●35 have white wingtips.



BELOW: Early in 1938 the first He 111 Es were delivered to 2.K/88. This variant could carry a 2,000 kg (4,400 lb) bomb load and was powered by the more powerful Jumo 211 D engines. This aircraft, 25●45, retains the pre-war three colour camouflage carried by the Luftwaffe with its spinners painted in the Staffel colour, red.

July 1936-March 1939

ABOVE: Most of the earlier He 111s delivered to K/88 in Spain had overall pale grey finish although there were exceptions to this rule.

1938-August 1939

Prelude to War
1938 to August 1939

'I declare before the world that the reports launched in Germany concerning the disorders by workers, the shedding of streams of blood, and the creation of a situation beyond the control of the Austrian Government are lies from A to Z. President Miklas has asked me to tell the people of Austria that we have yielded to force since we are not prepared, even in this terrible situation, to shed blood. We have decided to order the troops to offer no resistance. So I take leave of the Austrian people with the German word of farewell uttered from the depth of my heart: God protect Austria.

Dr. Kurt von Schuschnigg, Chancellor of Austria, 1934-1938
12 March 1938

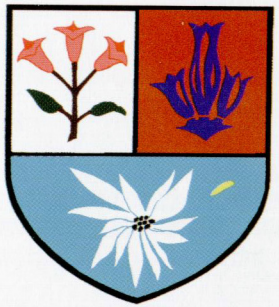
During the early 1930s, both Austrian and German Nazis had been campaigning for unification of the two countries. The murder of the Chancellor, Englebert Dollfuss, in 1934 had heralded an attempted coup by the Austrian Nazi Party, but this was defeated by government forces under Kurt von Schuschnigg. For the next four years the problem simmered, culminating in February 1938 when Hitler insisted that von Schuschnigg come to Berchtesgaden where he demanded concessions. The arrival 'purely by chance' of three generals (including Hugo Sperrle who commanded *Luftwaffe* forces on the Austrian border) acted as a further threat. Hitler demanded the immediate lifting of the ban on the Austrian Nazi Party, for Dr. Seyss-Inquart, a covert Nazi, to be made Interior Minister, and for the country to be absorbed into the German economic system.

Von Schuschnigg immediately realised that agreeing to these demands would result in the end of Austrian independence and attempted to stall for time. Hitler then made a speech which coincided with carefully orchestrated demonstrations by Austrian Nazis. Jewish buildings were attacked, and in Graz, 20,000 demonstrators tore down the Austrian flag and replaced it with the swastika. Von Schuschnigg had one more card to play. France had previously suggested that a plebiscite of the Austrian people be held and on 9 March, he announced that this should take place on the 13th. But Nazi pressure was beginning to build with the German armed forces activating *Sonderfall*, or Contingency Plan, Otto, in which three Do 17 E equipped *Gruppen* from KG 155 and KG 255 were readied to attack.

By 14.00 hours on 11 March, the threats had reached such proportions that von Schuschnigg agreed to cancel the plebiscite. This capitulation was no longer considered sufficient and Germany demanded that von Schuschnigg be replaced by Seyss-Inquart. At dawn on the 12th, German troops began to cross the Austrian frontier, and at 08.20 II. and III./KG 155 took off for Wien (Vienna). The first aircraft to land there was a Do 17 E of 6./KG 155 which touched down after dropping leaflets and next day two *Staffeln* from the unit arrived at Klagenfurt.

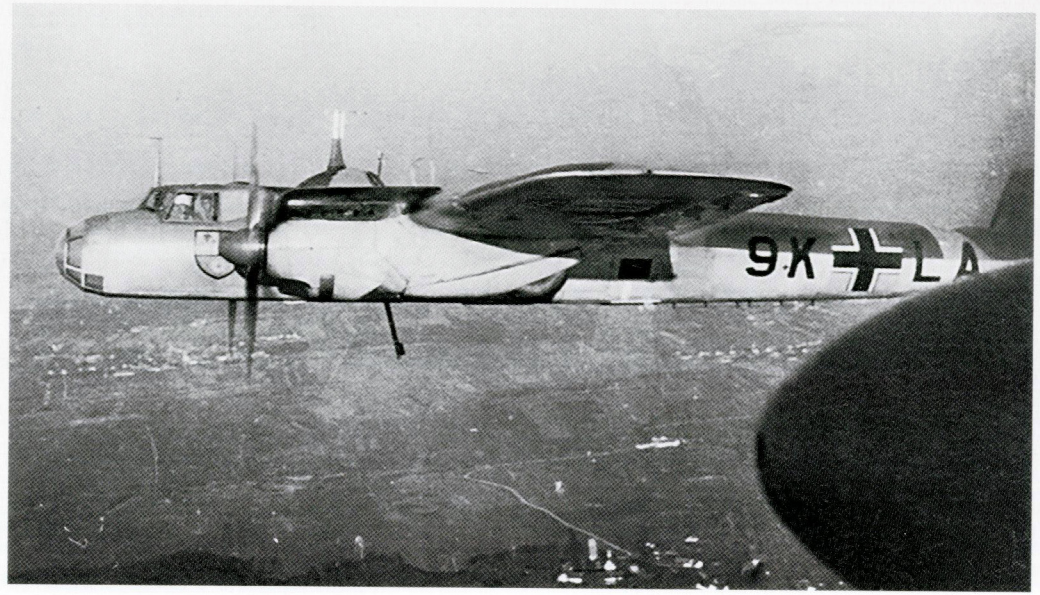
The absorption of Austria into Germany provided the *Luftwaffe* with valuable additional equipment and was later to result in the creation of *Luftwaffenkommando* Österreich on 1 August 1938 with its

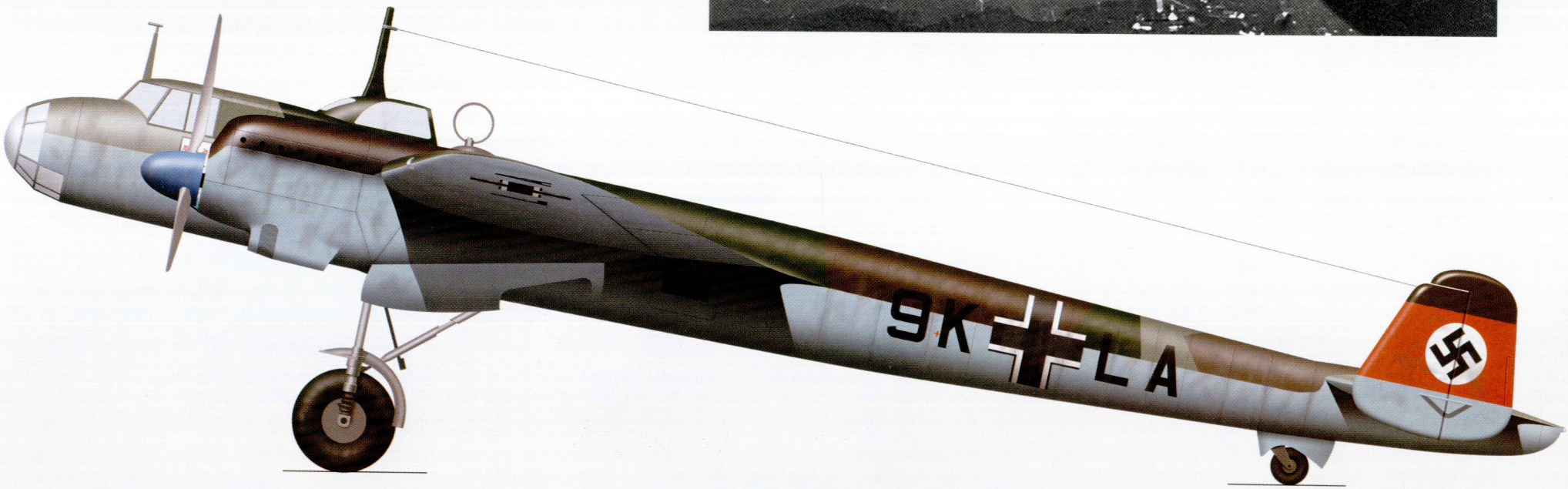
BELOW: This Do 17 E has just been delivered to a Luftwaffe bomber unit, possibly KG 153, to replace its earlier equipment, the Do 23, which stands in the background. The aircraft is painted in the standard three colour (61, 62 and 63) uppersurface scheme of the time, but still has its radio call sign BA+LA.



Emblem of
KG 51 *Geschwader Stab*

RIGHT: A Do 17 E-1 of the Geschwader Stab of KG 51 shortly after its formation from KG 255 on 1 May 1939 at Landsberg/Lech. It is interesting to note that the aircraft still carries the three-colour uppersurface scheme of dark brown, pale grey and medium green, but from the patches of new paint it is possible to see that the original five character code has been replaced by the new identification '9K+LA'. The badge is a composite of the flower emblems of three Gruppen of KG 255.





Dornier Do 17 E-1 of the *Geschwader Stab* of KG 51 'Edelweiss', May 1939
On 1 May 1939 a wholesale redesignation of all *Luftwaffe* bomber units took place, I. and III./KG 255, for example, becoming I. and III./KG 51. Although a new system of unit codes was introduced at this time, these were often applied over the original three-colour camouflage scheme to avoid having to completely repaint the aircraft in the new black green and dark green uppersurface scheme. It is possible to see here that the old five-character code has been over-painted and replaced with 9K+LA.

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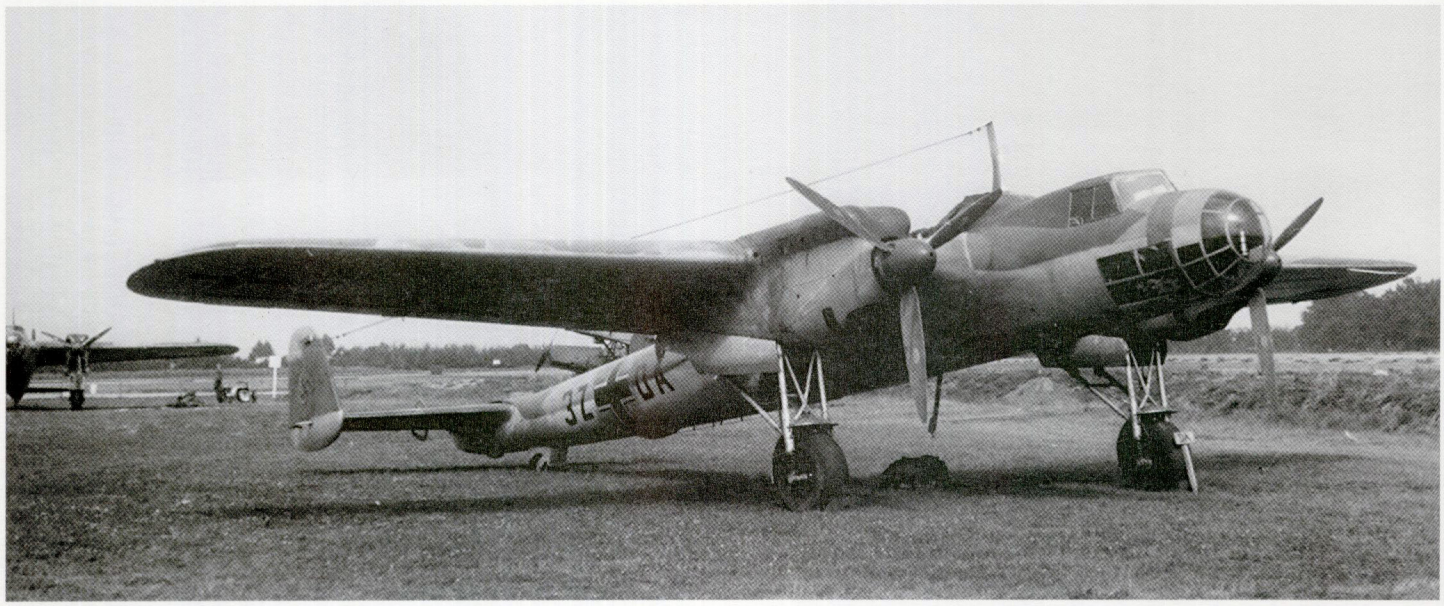
RIGHT: This Do 17 E-1 carries the emblem of an experimental signals unit possibly connected with the radio bomb-aiming experiments carried out by Luftfnachrichten Abteilung 100 during 1938-39. This unit later became KGr 100 which led many of the night bombing attacks on the British Isles during 1940 and 1941.

BELOW: The Geschwader Stab of KG 77 was formed on 1 May 1939 at Prague-Khebly under Oberst Heinrich Seywald. The unit was equipped with both Do 17 Es and Zs. One of the former, seen here, is painted in the pre-war three colour camouflage scheme with the code '3Z+DA' added to both sides of the fuselage in black. The last two letters were painted beneath the starboard and port wings respectively.



RIGHT: 'Pick As ist Trumpf' (The ace of spades is trumps!) proclaims the motto under the emblem of 8./KG 153 (later 8./KG 3) photographed on this early Dornier Do 17.

BELOW: A peaceful scene at Klagenfurt in Austria as Luftwaffe airmen relax in front of their Do 17 Fs during the late summer of 1938. The aircraft carry the standard three colour uppersurface camouflage of dark brown (61), medium green (62) and pale grey (63) but belong to the reconnaissance unit 1.(F)/28. This unit was renamed 1.(F)/124 in November 1938.

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LEFT: A rare in flight photograph of a Do 17 M-1 bomber over Germany. It gives an excellent idea of the dividing line between the dark green upper and pale blue lower surface camouflage.

headquarters in Wien. The new command encompassed the whole of Austria and was led by *Gen.Oberst* Alexander Löhr Shortly afterwards, personnel from the old Austrian Bomber *Geschwader* 1 were incorporated into I. and III./KG 155 which were redesignated I. and III./KG 158 and transferred to Wiener-Neustadt and Wels respectively.

During the early months of 1938 new versions of the main *Luftwaffe* bomber types had begun to enter service. A small number of the improved He 111 D models were completed before they were replaced on the production line, in January 1938, by the He 111 E powered by two 1,010 hp Jumo 211 D engines. This variant was some 50 km/h (30 mph) faster and its bomb load was increased to 2,000 kg. The He 111 F, of which only a small number were produced, was fitted with a redesigned wing with a straight leading edge. At the same time, the He 111 J appeared, this variant being identical to the F apart from being powered by the more powerful DB 600 G engines. The first He 111 Fs and Js were delivered to the *Luftwaffe* during the summer of 1938.

ABOVE: A Do 17 M as seen through the gun sight of another aircraft.

Earlier in 1938 the Do 17 E was replaced by the M-model powered by two 900 hp Bramo 323 radial engines. This possessed a maximum speed of 410 km/h (255 mph) and the bomb load was doubled to 1,000 kg (2,200 lbs). Although being phased out of service a small number of the improved Ju 86 E and G models were also delivered at this time, these variants having the troublesome Jumo Diesel engines replaced by BMW 132 radials.

Hitler's next military venture was the annexation of the Sudetenland, a part of Western Czechoslovakia with a large ethnic German population. In May 1938 he began to move his divisions to the borders of the Sudetenland with the intention of instituting a takeover, but this time Britain, France and the Soviet Union all threatened military action should the operation continue. Hitler was forced to back down, but on 12 September, in a speech at the Nürnberg Rally, he insisted on 'self determination' for the area and hurled insults and threats at the Czech government in Prague. This provocation resulted in the Sudeten Germans instigating a revolt which was ruthlessly crushed by the Czech president, Eduard Benes.

At this point the diplomatic impasse was broken by the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, who suggested that he meet Hitler at his home at Berchtesgaden with a view to agreeing a peaceful

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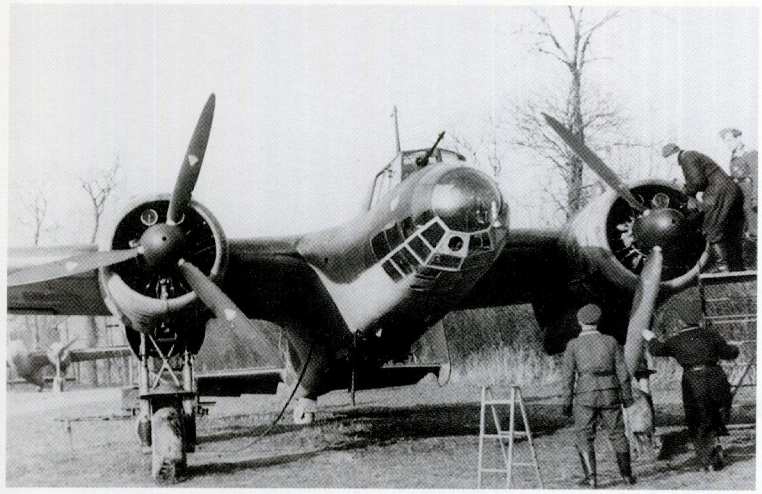

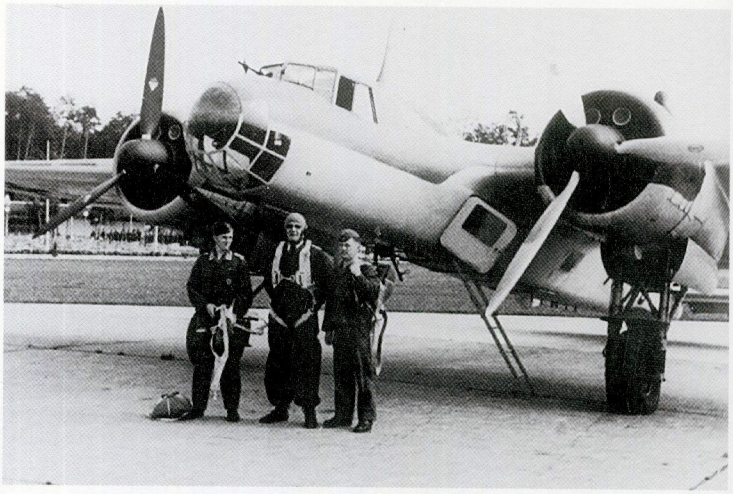

ABOVE: The soft-edged camouflage dividing line is shown well on this photograph of mechanics at work on the port radial engine of a Do 17. Note the black and white triangular logos of the VDM company painted on the starboard black green colour propeller blades.

settlement. The result was that Britain and France backed down completely from their previous position and agreed to allow Germany to march into the area, hoping that this would signal the end of Hitler's aspirations for European territory. The resulting Munich agreement of 30 September did, however, prevent Germany from immediately taking over the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

German forces crossed the border into the Sudetenland on 1 October 1938, but bad weather prevented much flying during the first twelve days of the operation. Following its successful occupation, Hitler created the *Gross Deutsche Reich* (the Greater German Empire). Previously, in February 1938, another reshuffle had taken place within the *Luftwaffe's* command structure, the seven *Luftkreiskommando* being replaced by three Air Force Group Commands or *Luftwaffengruppenkommando*. These covered north-east Germany with headquarters in Berlin, north-west Germany with headquarters in Braunschweig, and southern Germany with headquarters in München. As previously mentioned, *Luftwaffenkommando* Österreich (or Ostmark), was established later to cover Austria with its headquarters in Wien. Under these, in addition to the *Luftgaukommando*, a number of more flexible *Fliegerdivision* were formed.

At the time of the Sudeten crisis all Luftwaffe bomber forces had been moved to the area and comprised the following:

ABOVE: Note the difference between the propellers on this Do 17 M. It is evident that the port propeller has been changed since the blades are in natural silver while the starboard propeller is in the standard black green finish with the VDM manufacturer's logo.

Luftwaffengruppenkommando 1

Stab/LG 1	He 111 E	Greifswald
II.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	Ju 86 A & D	Schwerin
III.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	two *Staffeln* with He 111 E	Greifswald
	One *Staffel* with Do 17 M	Greifswald
Stab/KG 152	Ju 86 G	Neubrandenburg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 152	Ju 86 G	Neubrandenburg
IV.*Gruppe*/KG 152	Ju 86 A & D	Kolberg
Stab/KG 153	Do 17 E & F	Merseburg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Do 17 E	Merseburg
II.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Do 17 E	Finsterwalde
III.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Do 17 E	Altenburg
IV.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Ju 86 A & D	Liegnitz
Stab/KG 157	He 111 B	Hannover-Langenhagen
I.*Gruppe*/KG 157	He 111 B	Hannover-Langenhagen
II.*Gruppe*/KG 157	He 111 B	Wunstorf
III.*Gruppe*/KG 157	He 111 B	Delmenhorst
Stab/KG 253	He 111 J	Gotha
I.*Gruppe*/KG 253	He 111 J	Gotha
II.*Gruppe*/KG 253	He 111 J	Erfurt
III.*Gruppe*/KG 253	He 111 E	Nordhausen
I.*Gruppe*/KG 254	He 111 E	Langen-Diebach
Stab/KG 257	He 111 B	Lüneburg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 257	He 111 B	Lübeck-Blankensee
II.*Gruppe*/KG 257	He 111 B	Lüneburg

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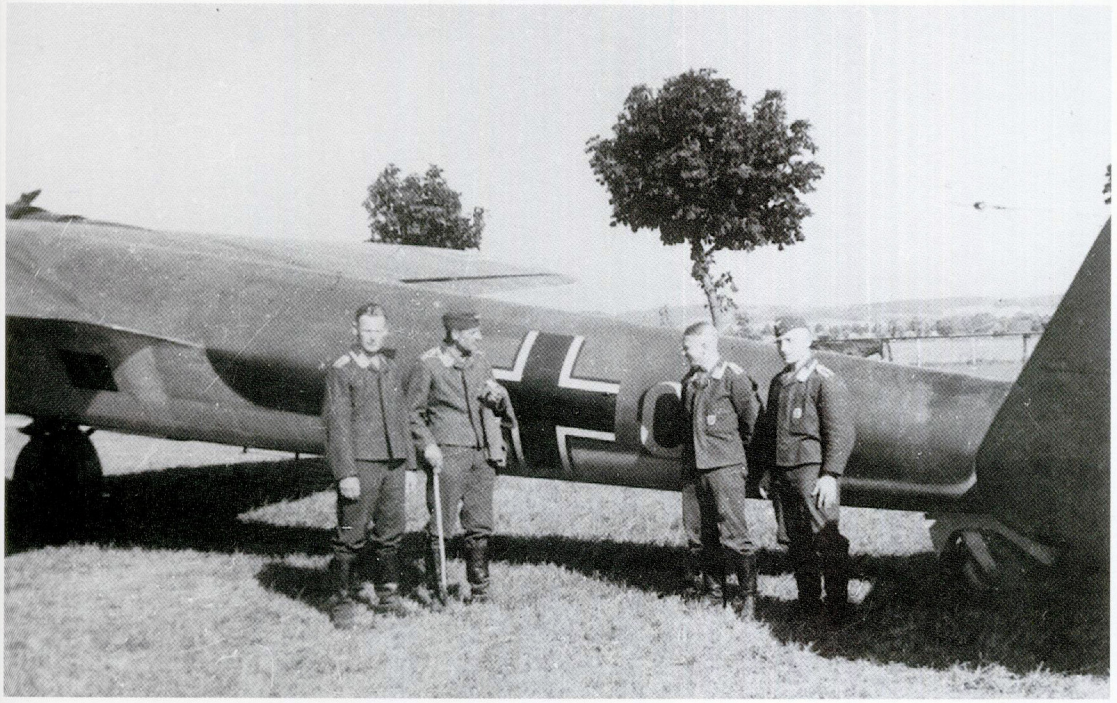
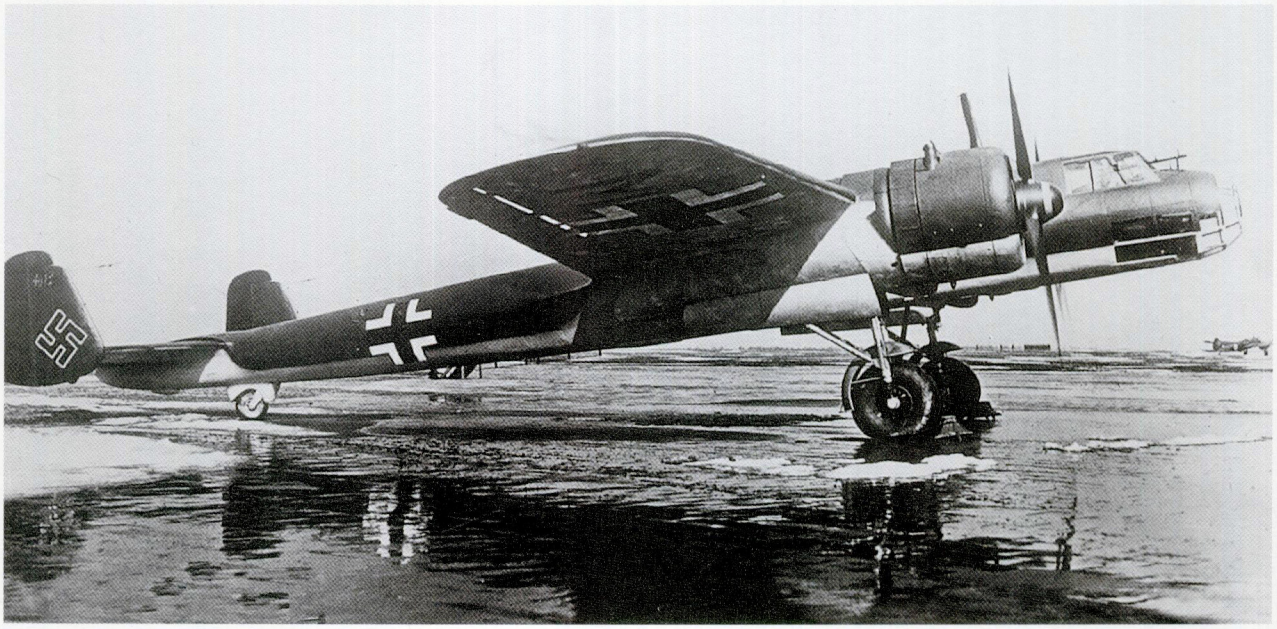
Luftwaffengruppenkommando 3 and *Luftwaffenkommando Österreich*

Stab/KG 158	Do 17 E and F	Wiener Neustadt
I.*Gruppe*/KG 158	Do 17 E	Wiener-Neustadt
II.*Gruppe*/KG 158	Do 17 E	Wiener-Neustadt
III.*Gruppe*/KG 158	Do 17 E	Wels
II.*Gruppe*/KG 254	He 111	Gießen
Stab/KG 255	Do 17 E & He 111	Landsberg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 255	Do 17 E	Landsberg
II.*Gruppe*/KG 255	Do 17 E	Leipheim
III.*Gruppe*/KG 255	Do 17 E	Memmingen
Stab/KG 355	He 111	Ansbach
I.*Gruppe*/KG 355	He 111	Ansbach
II.*Gruppe*/KG 355	He 111	Schwäbisch Hall
III.*Gruppe*/KG 355	He 111	Giebelstadt



LEFT: A Luftwaffe bomber crew, probably from either KG 3 or KG 76, stand in front of their Do 17 M during the summer of 1939. Although the new system of Geschwader codes had been introduced, the aircraft still carries the older type of fuselage Balkenkreuz with a narrow white outline.

BELOW: A standard production Do 17 P-1 just after roll-out from the Dornier factory at Friedrichshafen. It carries the standard black green and dark green uppersurfaces with pale blue beneath. The radio call sign, applied to both sides of the fuselage in black, is virtually invisible against the dark green paint.



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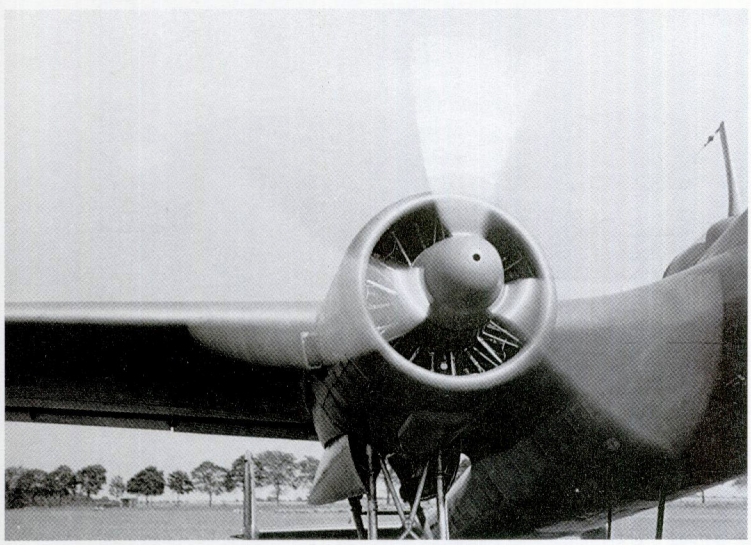
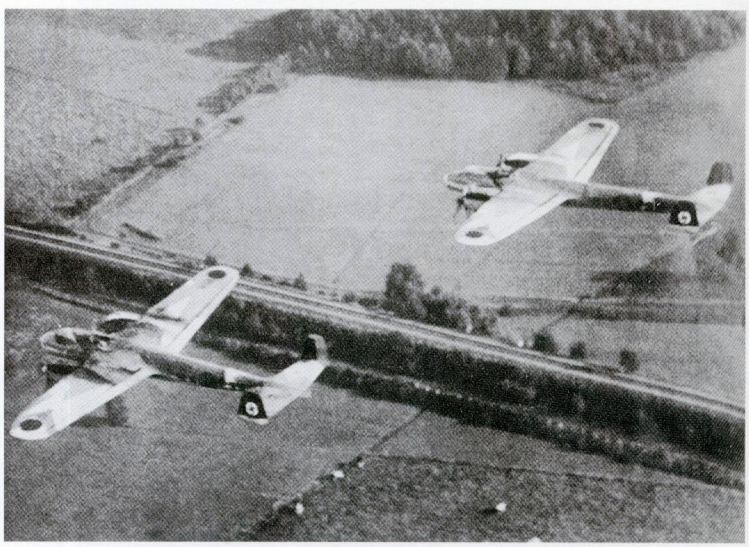
Any hope of peace in Europe was dashed when Hitler, furious at being prevented from taking over the whole of Czechoslovakia by the Munich agreement, decided to invade the remainder of the country on 15 March 1939, having already isolated friendly Slovakia. The invasion was supported by 500 *Luftwaffe* aircraft with bomber forces drawn from KG 155, 255 and 355. Little opposition was encountered but, unlike in Austria, no senior commanders or nucleus of elite pilots were gained as a result - in fact large numbers of Czech pilots went on to reinforce the British and French Air Forces. Eight days later Memel was annexed from the Baltic state of Lithuania.

As will have been noted, the *Lehrgeschwader* at Greifswald had been expanded on 1 November 1938 into two separate units, LG 1 and LG 2. These now comprised:

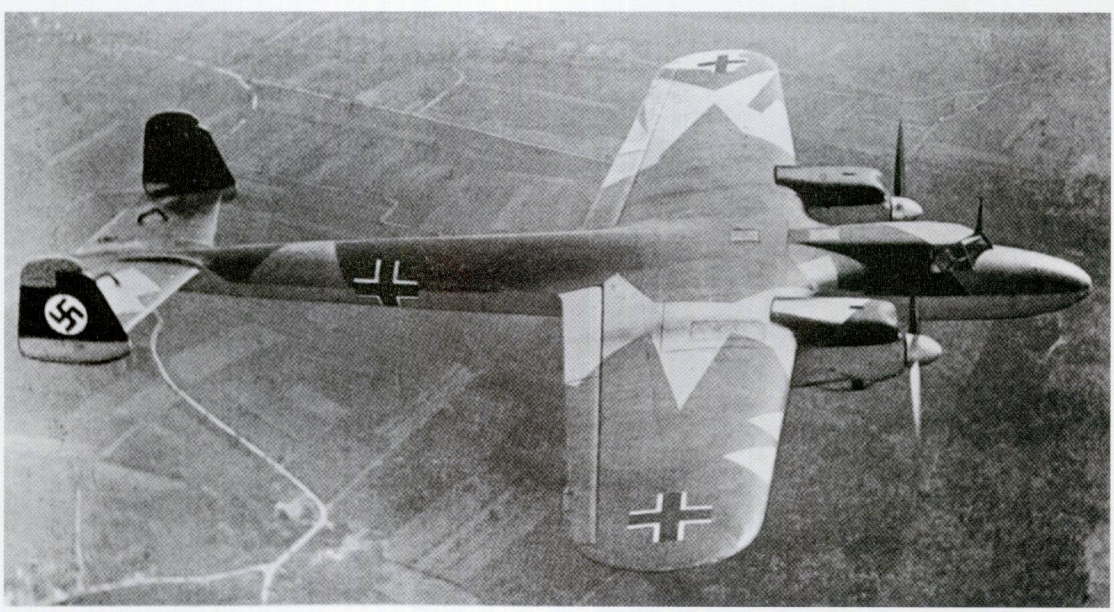
Stab/LG 1	Greifswald	formed from *Stab/LG* Greifswald
I.(Z)*Gruppe*/LG 1	Barth	formed from II.*(schwere Jagd)/LG* Greifswald
II.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	Schwerin	formed from III./KG 152
III.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	Greifswald	formed from III.*(Kampf)/LG* Greifswald
IV.(St)*Gruppe*/LG 1	Barth	formed from IV.*(Stuka)/LG* Greifswald
Stab/LG 2	Garz	newly formed
I.(J)*Gruppe*/LG 2	Garz	formed from I.*(leicht Jagd)/LG* Greifswald
II.*(Schlacht)Gruppe*/LG 2	Tutow	formed from *Schlachtfliegergruppe* 10
III.*(Aufkl)Gruppe*/LG 2	Jüterbog-Damm	formed from *Aufkl.Gr.Jüterbog*
10.*(See)Staffel*/LG 2	Travemünde	newly formed

BELOW: A spectacular photograph of the starboard Bramo 323 A-1 engine of a Do 17 M bomber being run up prior to take-off.





BELOW: Two Do 17 E-1s of 7./KG 255 'Alpen' in flight over Bavaria during exercises in 1938. For these, the Balkenkreuz national insignia had been replaced by bright red circles, indicating that the aircraft were part of the 'red force'.



RIGHT: The segmented camouflage pattern of dark brown (61), medium green (62) and pale grey (63) is clearly shown in this photograph of a Do 17 E. These colours could be interchanged.

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A year later a third bomber *Gruppe* was formed within *Lehrgeschwader* 1, I.(K)/LG 1 at Jesau equipped with He 111s, the earlier I.(Z)/LG 1 being renamed V.(Z)/LG 1. It was also intended that the I./LG 3 be formed from I./KG 152, but this plan was abandoned, I./KG 252 becoming II./KG 1 on 18 September 1939.

Following the occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia another major reshuffle took place within the *Luftwaffe* areas of command on 1 February 1939. The old *Luftwaffengruppenkommando* were replaced by four *Luftflotten* (Air Fleets) plus a *Luftwaffenkommando* to co-ordinate operations in East Prussia. These units, their commanders and headquarters were:

General der Flieger Albert Kesselring

General der Flieger Hellmuth Felmy

General der Flieger Hugo Sperrle

General der Flieger Alexander Löhr

***Luftflotte* 1**	***Gen.d.Fl.* Albert Kesselring**	**Berlin**
Luftwaffenkommando Ost Preussen	Gen.Lt. Wilhelm Wimmer	Königsberg
1.*Fliegerdivision*	*Gen.Lt.* Ulrich Grauert	
2.*Fliegerdivision*	*Gen.Major* Bruno Loerzer	
Luftgau I	*Gen.Major* Mohr	Königsberg
Luftgau III	*Gen.Lt.* Weise	Berlin
Luftgau IV	*Gen.Major* Wilhelm Mayer	Dresden
***Luftflotte* 2**	***Gen.d.Fl.* Hellmuth Felmy**	**Braunschweig**
3.*Fliegerdivision*	*Gen.Major* Richard Putzier	
4.*Fliegerdivision*	*Gen.d.Fl.* Alfred Keller	
7.*Fliegerdivision*	*Gen.Major* Kurt Student	
Luftgau VI	*Gen.Major* August Schmidt	Münster
Luftgau XI	*Gen.Major.* Ludwig Wolff	Hannover
***Luftflotte* 3**	***Gen.d.Fl.* Hugo Sperrle**	**München**
5.Fliegerdivision	*Gen.Major* Robert Ritter von Greim	
6.Fliegerdivision	*Gen.Major* Otto Deßloch	
Luftgau VII	*Gen.Major* Zenetti	München
Luftgau XII	*Gen.Major* Heilingbrunner	Wiesbaden
Luftgau XIII	*Oberst* Mußhoff	Nürnberg
***Luftflotte* 4**	***Gen.Lt.* Alexander Löhr**	**Wien**
Luftgau VIII	*Gen.Major* Danckelmann	Breslau
Luftgau XVII	*Gen.Lt.* Hirschauer	Wien

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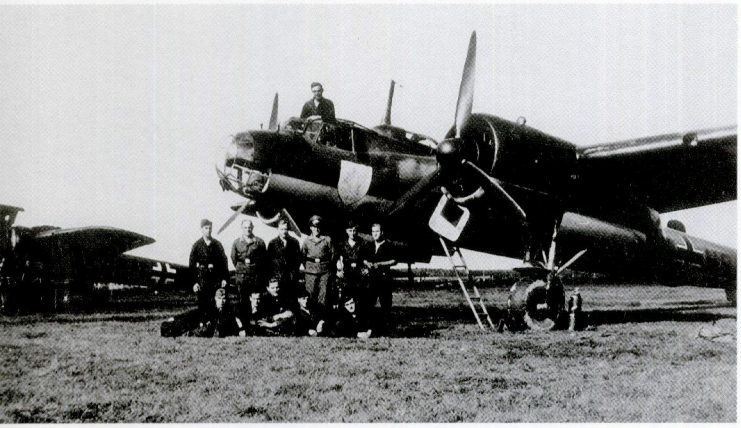
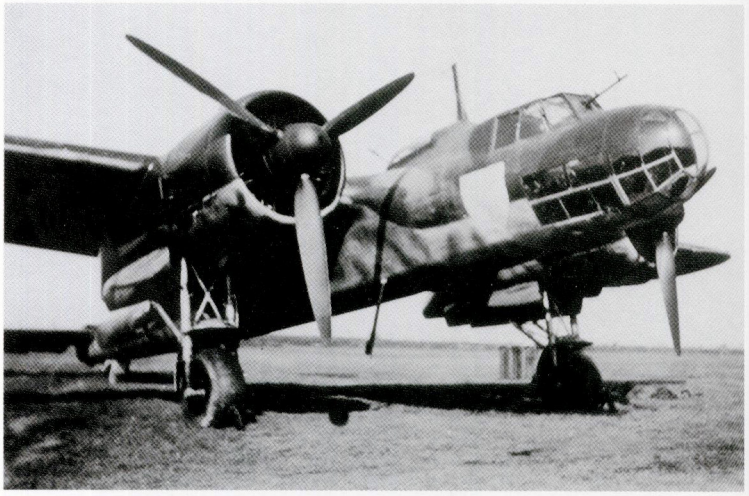
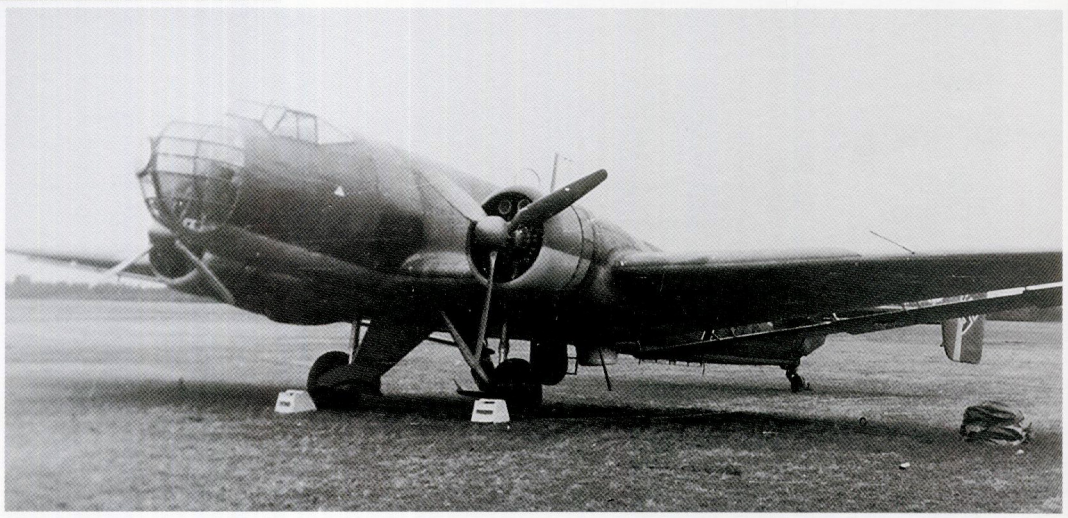
Luftflottenkommando Boundaries 1 April 1939

Luftflottenkommando 1
Luftflottenkommando 2
Luftflottenkommando 3
Luftflottenkommando 4
Luftflottenkommando Headquarters
Luftgau Headquarters
Luftflottenkommando boundary
Luftgau boundary



LEFT AND BELOW: III./KG 255 was redesignated III./KG 51 at Memmingen on 1 May 1939, the Gruppe being led by Oberst Alois Stöckl. At this time the unit's aircraft had black green and dark green uppersurfaces with the white Edelweiss emblem of the unit painted below the nose on a yellow shield. The most prominent aircraft in this pair of photographs of Do 17 Es shows 9K+HR of 7./KG 51. The Gruppe was re-equipped with the He 111 H before Germany invaded Poland.





RIGHT AND ABOVE: In an attempt to rectify the bad forward visibility problem experienced with the early production versions of the Ju 86, the complete forward fuselage of the aircraft was redesigned under the designation Ju 86 G. The only operational unit to be equipped with the variant was a part of KG 1, and even this unit transferred its aircraft to training units during the summer of 1939. The aircraft shown here was flown by one of the, Blindflugschulen (instrument training schools) which carried the code S13+C76 in black, the letter 'S' indicating an instructional unit.

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With the establishment of these *Luftflotten* a wholesale redesignation of all *Luftwaffe* operational units took place. The old three-figure unit identifications were replaced by a one- or two-figure number. Units numbered between 1 and 25 were placed under the control of *Luftflotte* 1, those numbered between 26 and 50 under *Luftflotte* 2, those between 51 and 75 under *Luftflotte* 3 and those between 76 and 99 under *Luftflotte* 4. Thus, for example, I./KG 153 became I./KG 77. A full list of these redesignations is given on page 52.

Shortly after this, on 4 July 1939, all operational *Luftwaffe* units with the exception of the *Jagdverband*, (single-engine fighter units) and later the *Schlachtverband* (ground attack units) were ordered to adopt a new four character code system. An example was 1H+GT, an aircraft of 9./KG 26. The first two characters, in this case '1H' (which were always made up of a letter and figure) were painted to the left of the fuselage *Balkenkreuz* and identified the *Geschwader* (or autonomous *Gruppe*) to which the aircraft belonged. By the time war began, in September 1939, the following bomber unit codes had been allocated:

Kampfgeschwader 1 *Hindenburg*	V4
Kampfgeschwader 2	U5
Kampfgeschwader 3	5K
Kampfgeschwader 4 *General Wever*	5J
Kampfgeschwader 25 (later KG 30)	4D
Kampfgeschwader 26 *Löwen*	1H
Kampfgeschwader 27 *Boelcke*	1G
Kampfgeschwader 28	2F
Kampfgeschwader 51 *Edelweiss*	9K
Kampfgeschwader 53 *Legion Condor*	A1
Kampfgeschwader 54 *Totenkopf*	B3
Kampfgeschwader 55 *Greif*	G1
Kampfgeschwader 76	F1
Kampfgeschwader 77	3Z
Luftfnachrichten Abteilung (KGr 100)	6N
Lehrgeschwader 1	L1

The aircraft's individual letter, in the above example 'G', was painted directly to the right of the cross with a further letter identifying the *Stabskette* or *Staffel*. These *Staffel* letters were as follows:

A ***Geschwader Stabskette***

B	I. *Gruppe* ***Stabskette***	**C**	**II. *Gruppe* *Stabskette***
H	1.*Staffel*	M	4.*Staffel*
K	2.*Staffel*	**N**	5.*Staffel*
L	3.*Staffel*	**P**	6.*Staffel*
D	**III. *Gruppe* *Stabskette***	**E**	**IV. *Gruppe* *Stabskette***
R	7.*Staffel*	U	10.*Staffel*
S	8.*Staffel*	**V**	11.*Staffel*
T	9.*Staffel*	**W**	12.*Staffel*

In virtually all cases the first, second and fourth characters were painted black, but the third (individual) letter was often painted in the *Staffel* colour. These were blue for the *Geschwader Stab*, green for the *Gruppen Stabsketten*, white for the 1.*Staffel* within a *Gruppe*, red for the *2.Staffel* within a *Gruppe* and yellow for the 3.*Staffel* within a *Gruppe*. The complete code was often repeated beneath the wings, and the individual letter was sometimes painted above.

By this time the 61/62/63 upper surface camouflage scheme for *Luftwaffe* bombers had been largely replaced by a low contrast pattern of black-green (70) and dark green (71) although there are several cases of the older scheme appearing with the new four character code system. The pale blue undersurfaces were retained. Use of this basic bomber scheme continued until quite late in the war, although other schemes were adopted for different conditions and theatres.

ABOVE: An He 111 E-1 of 1./KG 1 flies over the Baltic Coast just prior to the invasion of Poland. The aircraft still carries the three colour camouflage of the pre-war period with the unit code V4+EH painted on both sides of the fuselage and repeated below the wings. The individual letter 'E' was in white and the emblem of KG 1 was painted on both sides of the fuselage nose.

Redesignation of *Luftwaffe* bomber units, 1 May 1939

Unit	Aircraft	Formed from	Home Base
Luftwaffenlehrdivision		**Greifswald**	
Stab(K)/LG 1	He 111 H	existing	Greifswald
II.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	He 111 H	existing	Schwerin
III.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	He 111 H	existing	Greifswald
***Luftflotte* 1**			**Berlin**
Stab/KG 1	He 111 E	*Stab*/KG 152	Kolberg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 1	He 111 E	IV.*Gruppe.*/KG 152	Kolberg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 152	Ju 86 G	became II.*Gruppe*/KG 1 on 18 Sep 1939	Neubrandenburg
Stab/KG 2	Do 17 Z	*Stab*/KG 252	Sprottau
I.*Gruppe*/KG 2	Do 17 M	I.*Gruppe*/KG 252	Liegnitz
II.*Gruppe*/KG 2	Do 17 Z	II.*Gruppe*/KG 252	Liegnitz
Stab/KG 3	Do 17 Z	parts *Stab*/KG 153	Elbing
II.*Gruppe*/KG 3	Do 17 Z	II.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Heiligenbeil
III.*Gruppe*/KG 3	Do 17 Z	III.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Heiligenbeil
Stab*/KG 4*	He 111 P	*Stab/KG 253*	*Erfurt-Bindersleben*
I.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	I.*Gruppe*/KG 253	Gotha
II.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	II.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Erfurt-Bindersleben
III.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	III.*Gruppe*/KG 253	Nordhausen
***Luftflotte* 2**			**Braunschweig**
Stab/KG 26	He 111 H	*Stab*/KG 257	Lüneburg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H	I.*Gruppe*/KG 257	Lübeck-Blankensee
II.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H	II.*Gruppe*/KG 257	Lüneburg
Stab/KG 27	He 111 P	*Stab*/KG 157	Hannover-Langenhagen
I.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	I.*Gruppe*/KG 157	Hannover-Langenhagen
II.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	II.*Gruppe*/KG 157	Wunstorf
III.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	III.*Gruppe*/KG 157	Delmenhorst
II.*Gruppe*/KG 28	He 111 P	II.*Gruppe*/KG 254	Gütersloh
***Luftflotte* 3**			**München**
Stab/KG 51	Do 17 M	*Stab*/KG 255	Landsberg/Lech
I.*Gruppe*/KG 51	Do 17 M	I.*Gruppe*/KG 255	Landsberg/Lech
III.*Gruppe*/KG 51	Do 17 M	III./*Gruppe*/KG 255	Memmingen
Stab/KG 53	He 111 H	*Stab*/KG 355	Ansbach
I.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	I.*Gruppe*/KG 355	Ansbach
II.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	II.*Gruppe*/KG 355	Schwäbisch Hall
III.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	III.*Gruppe*/KG 355	Giebelstadt
Stab/KG 54	He 111 D & P	*Stab*/KG 254	Fritzlar
I.*Gruppe*/KG 54	He 111 P	I.*Gruppe*/KG 254	Fritzlar
Stab/KG 55	He 111 P	*Stab*/KG 155	Giessen
I.*Gruppe*/KG 55	He 111 P	I.*Gruppe*/KG 155	Langendiebach
II.*Gruppe*/KG 55	He 111 P	II.*Gruppe*/KG 155	Giessen
***Luftflotte* 4**			**Wien**
Stab/KG 76	Do 17 Z	*Stab*/KG 158	Wiener-Neustadt
I.*Gruppe*/KG 76	Do 17 Z	I.*Gruppe*/KG 158	Wiener-Neustadt
III.*Gruppe*/KG 76	Do 17 Z	III.*Gruppe*/KG 158	Wels
Stab/KG 77	Do 17 E/F	parts *Stab*/KG 153	Prag-Kbely
I.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 E	I.*Gruppe*/KG 153	Prag-Kbely
II.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 E	II.*Gruppe*/KG 158	Brünn
III.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 E	II.*Gruppe*/KG 255	Königgratz

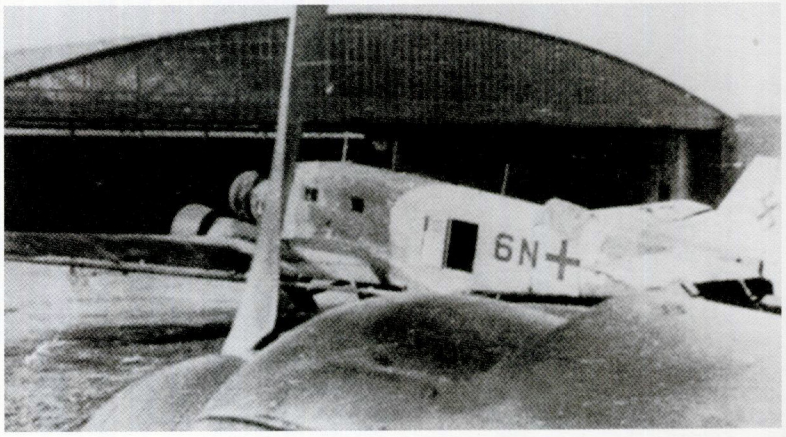
1938-August 1939

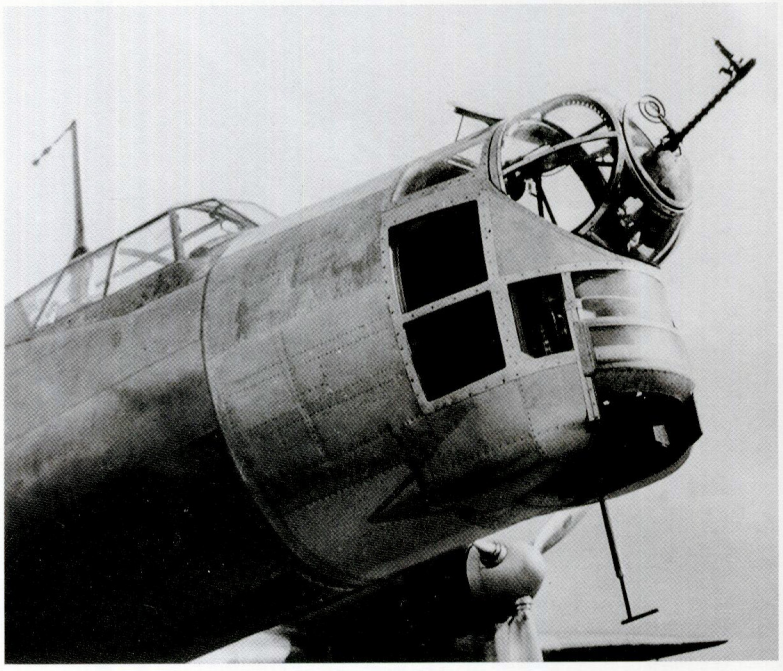
ABOVE: Luftwaffe 'black men' (so called because of their black overalls) refuelling a Do 17 M during the winter of 1938-39. The aircraft has the black-green and dark green uppersurface camouflage although the original colour photograph combined with the bright reflection of the snowy ground have somewhat distorted the colours.

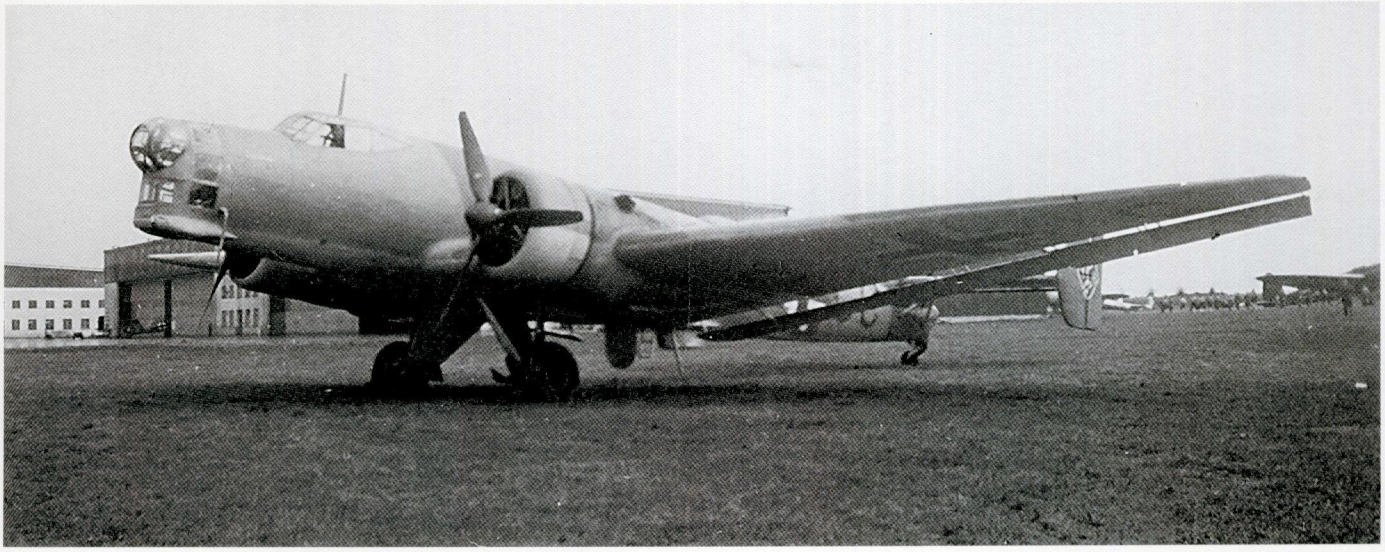
RIGHT: Another of the problems experienced with the early Ju 86s was that the pilot's forward view was severely restricted until the aircraft's tailwheel had lifted from the ground. This photograph illustrates this difficulty and also shows to advantage the hand-operated 7.9 mm MG 15 machine-gun position in the nose.

BELOW: Because of the problem with the Jumo 205 Diesel engines fitted to the Ju 86 D, these were replaced with two 850 hp BMW 132 F radial engines, a licence-built version of the American Pratt and Whitney Hornet.

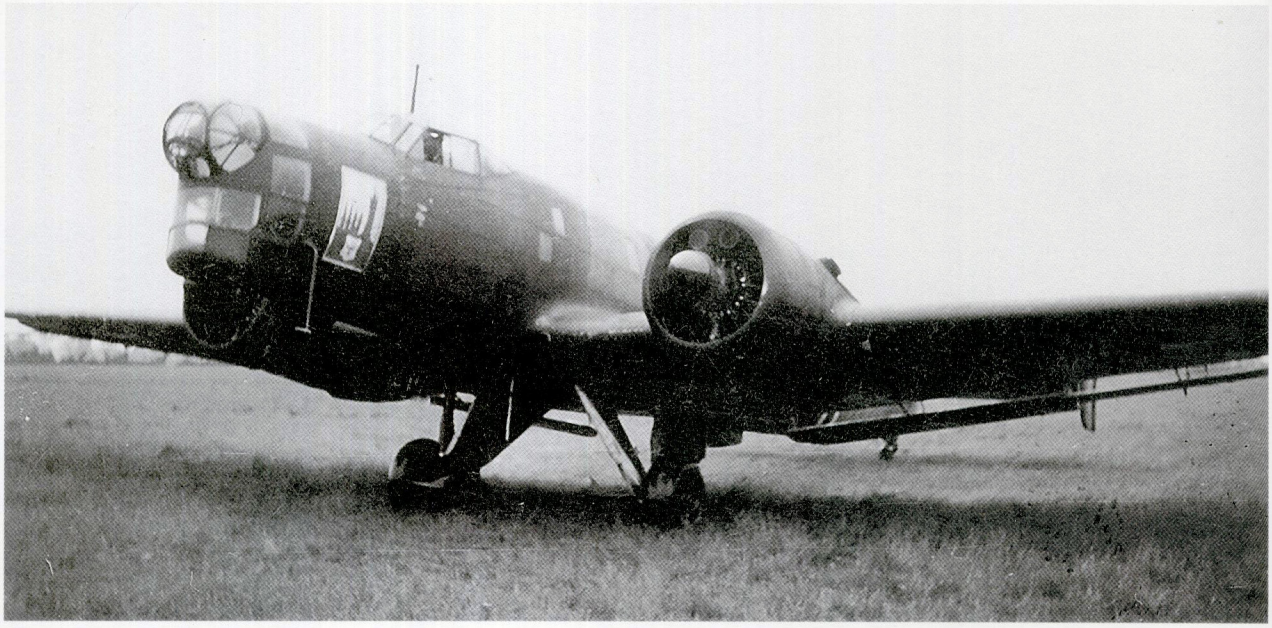
BELOW: A Ju 52/3m of 7./Luftnachrichten Abteilung 100 which later became 1./KGr 100. At this time the unit still carried the pre-war three colour camouflage system, but the unit code '6N' was already in use.



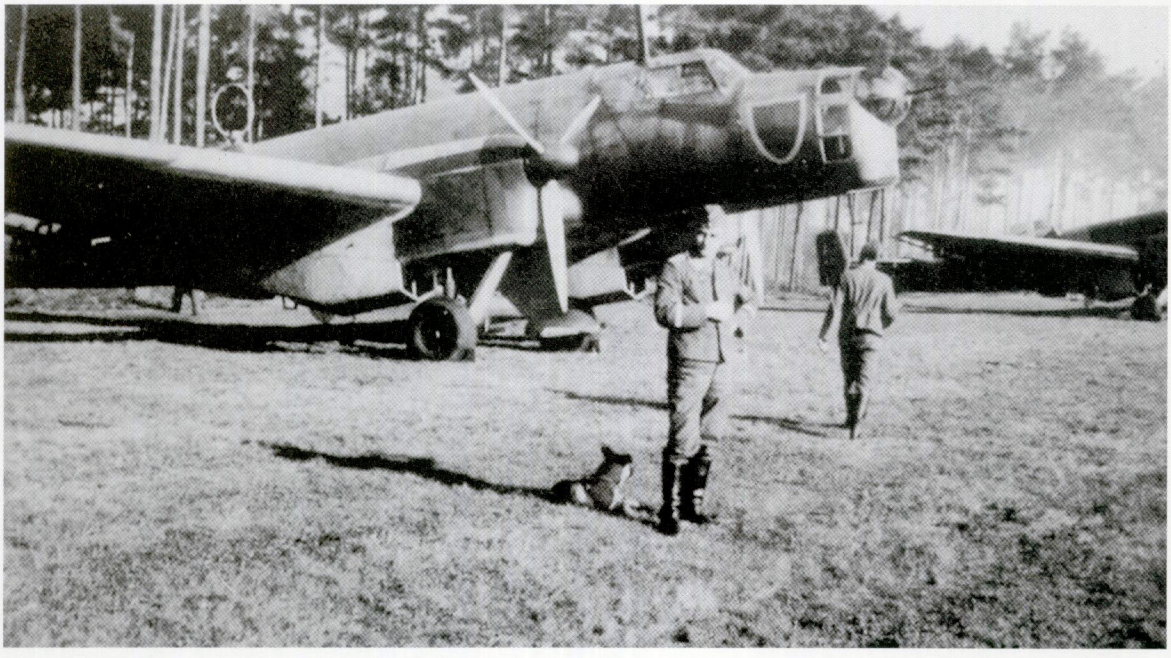




1938-August 1939

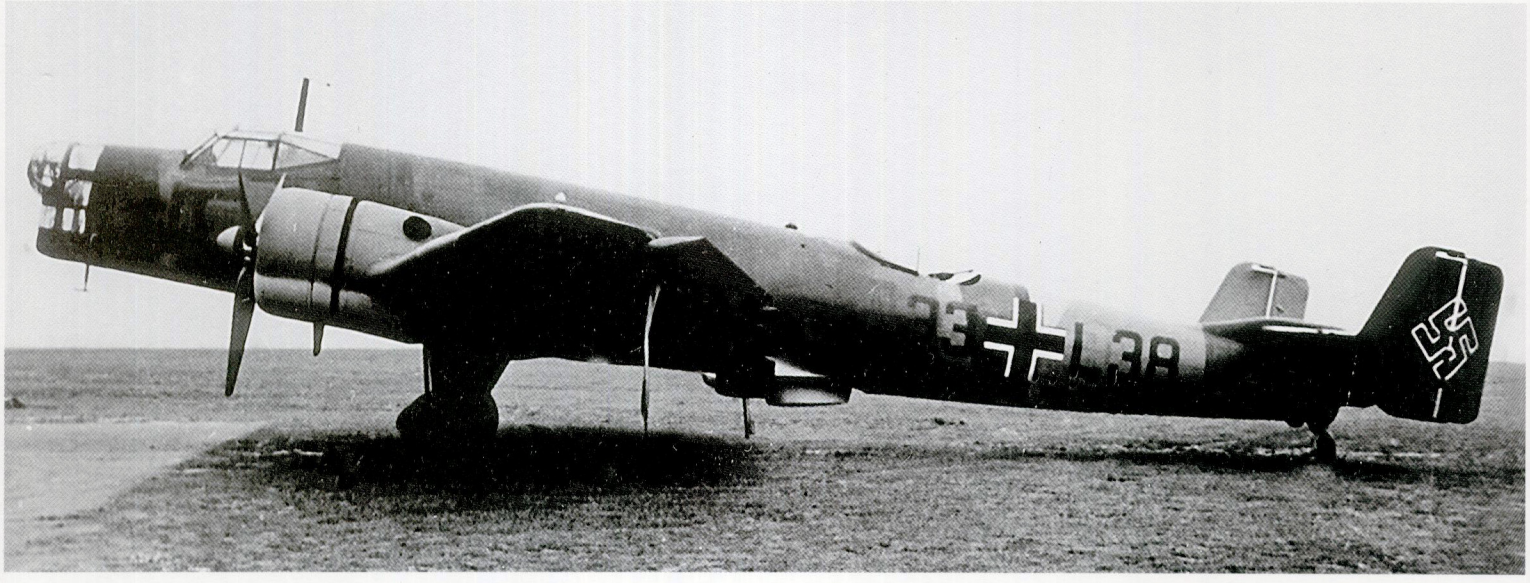


RIGHT: Following their phasing out from operational service, many Ju 86s were transferred to advanced training units. This E-model was flown by the Bordfunkerschule (radio operator's training school) at Halle/Saale. The emblem of the unit – a series of black towers in silhouette on a pale blue square with a small red and white shield – was painted behind the nose.

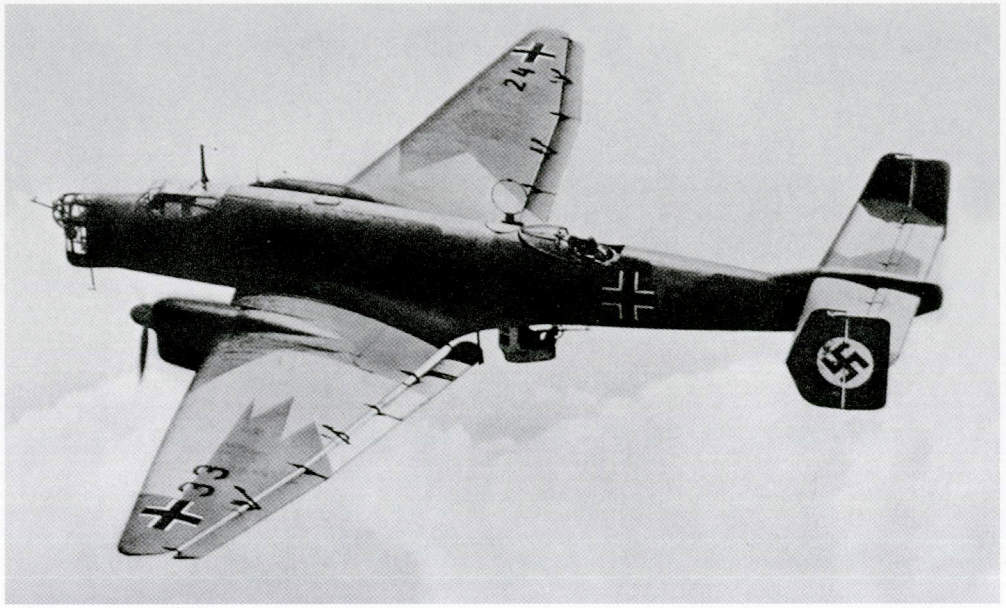


LEFT: Hauptfeldwebel Hajo Müller poses in front of a Ju 86 D of IV./KG 254 during the Sudeten crisis of September 1938. At this time the unit, which eventually became II./KG 28, moved to Neudorf near Oppeln in Silesia.

BELOW: Some of the few Ju 86 E-1s to be completed were delivered to 8./KG 253 at Nordhausen under Major Evers. Although this aircraft had the three-colour camouflage and early type Balkenkreuz, the Hakenkreuz was of the later type.

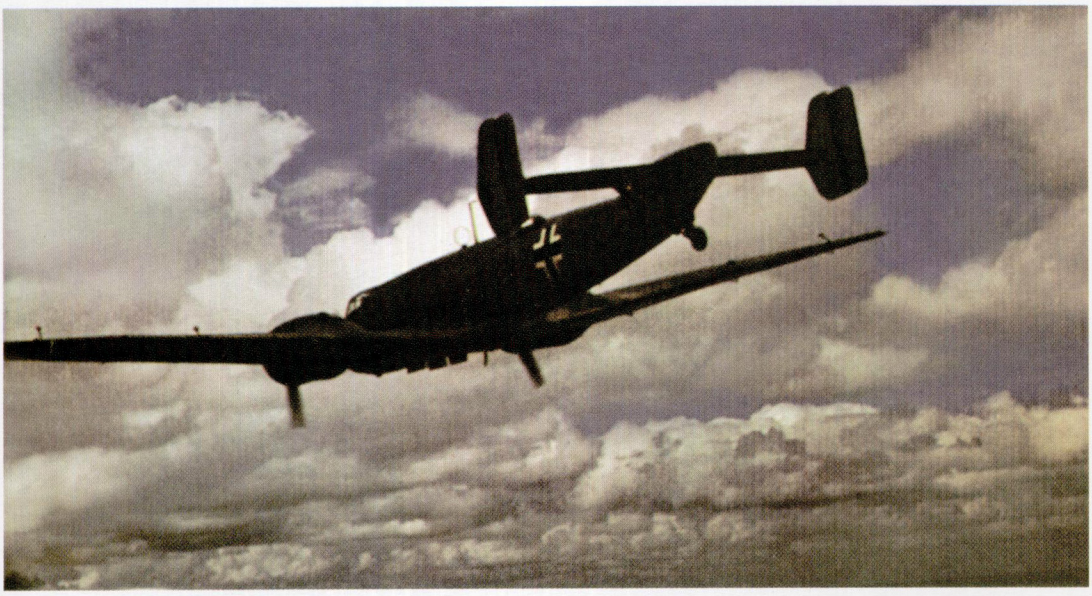


RIGHT: This view of a Ju 86 D of 4./KG 253 gives an excellent view of the 'splinter' pattern of dark brown, medium green and pale grey uppersurface camouflage. The unit's code 33+C24 has been painted on both sides of the fuselage and repeated above and below the wings.



Junkers Ju 86 D-1 of 4./KG 253 *'General Wever'*, early 1938
This unit finally exchanged its Ju 86s for He 111s late in 1937, retaining this type until the end of the war when it had been redesignated KG 4.

1938-August 1939



RIGHT: The Ju 86 had been phased out of Luftwaffe front line service by the time war began in September 1939. This rare colour photograph of the aircraft shows it with a latter style fuselage Balkenkreuz with wide white outline.

As the world proceeded inevitably towards war, the *Luftwaffe* bomber force received several new aircraft types. These were to form its main equipment during the first two years of the conflict. The He 111 P was a further development of the Heinkel bomber with an entirely new glazed offset nose and streamlined ventral gun position replacing the retractable 'dustbin'. Powered by two 1,100 hp Daimler-Benz DB 601 engines, the aircraft had a maximum speed 400 km/h (248 mph) and a maximum range of 2,000 km (1,243 miles). A defensive armament of up to seven MG 15 machine guns could be carried and provision was made for up to 2,000 kg (4,400 lbs) of bombs. The first He 111 Ps were delivered to the *Luftwaffe* bomber force in the spring of 1939 followed, in May, by the first He 111 H-1s. This variant was similar to the P-series, but was powered by two 1,010 hp Jumo 211 A-1 engines.

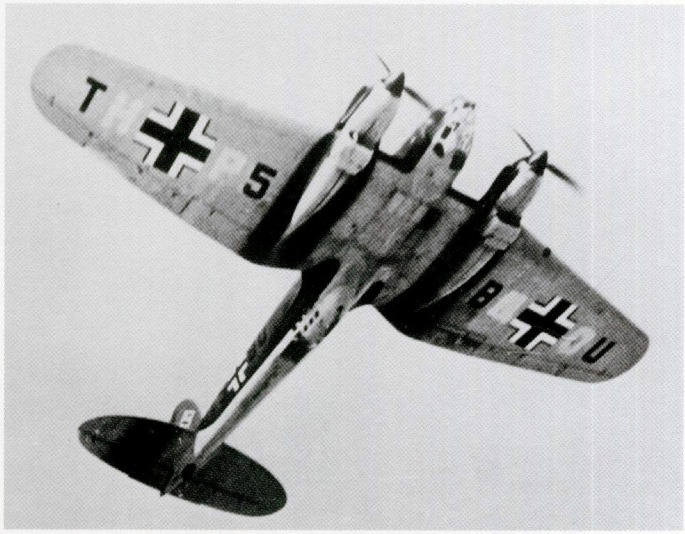
A much improved version of the Do 17 also began to enter service during the spring of 1939. Known as the Do 17 Z, the new sub-type introduced a completely new and deeper forward fuselage which was extensively glazed. This enabled defensive armament to be increased, which had been shown to be inadequate during operations in Spain, to six MG 15 machine guns. The variant was powered by two 1,000 hp Bramo 323 P engines which gave it a maximum speed of 410 km/h (255 mph). Maximum bomb load was 1,000 kg (2,200 lbs).

More promising than these two aircraft was the new Ju 88, the 'Wonder Bomber'. The aircraft was designed to the *Schnellbomber* (fast bomber) specification drawn up in the spring of 1935, which called for an aircraft with a maximum speed of 500 km/h (311 mph), a range of 3,000 km (1,850 miles) and a bomb load of 2,000 kg (4,400 lbs). It was initially conceived as a horizontal bomber, but in December 1936 the requirement was added for the aircraft to be capable of delivering its bombs in a 20 to 30 degree dive. After a considerable development process, the first production model, the Ju 88 A-1, began to leave the assembly in the late spring of 1939. The type was powered by two 1,200 hp Jumo 211 B-1 engines which gave it a maximum speed of 450 km/h (280 mph) and a range of 1,000 km (620 miles). Defensive armament comprised three MG 15 machine guns and bomb load could comprise up to 1,800 kg (4,000 lbs) carried in a mixture of internal bomb bays and racks beneath the wing centre section. During the spring of 1939 the first pre-production Ju 88 A-0s were delivered to *Erprobungsstaffel* 88 at Rechlin, this unit forming the basis of the first operational Ju 88 *Gruppe*, I./KG 25, in August.

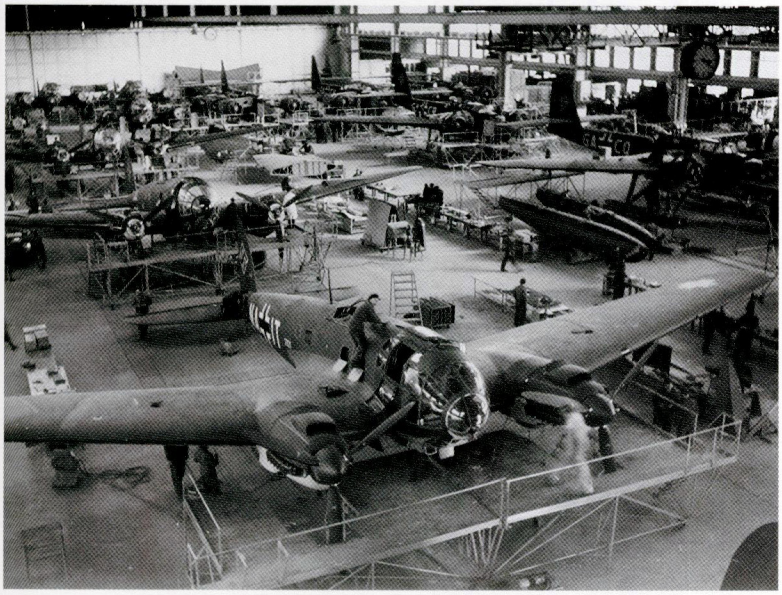
One other interesting bomber unit to be formed prior to the outbreak of the Second World War was KGr 100, established to test the highly secret X-Verfahren (X-system). This was a special radio bomb aiming device in which the pilot followed a directional beam, while the navigator listened for cross signals on different frequencies, activating a special clock when crossing each of them. The clock then calculated the speed above the ground and released the bombs automatically.

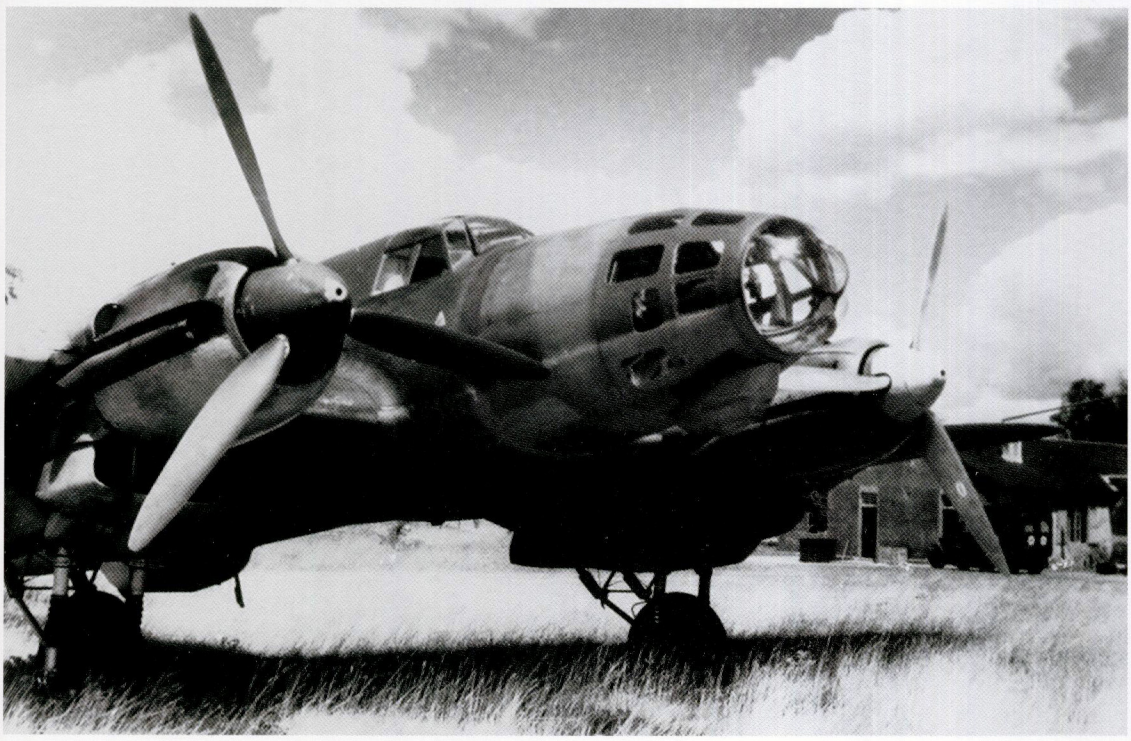
KGr 100 had been formed at Köthen near Dessau on 1 August 1938 as the 7.*Kompanie* of *Luftnachrichten Abteilung* (Air Signals Section) 100, being equipped initially with Ju 52/3ms. It was later joined by a second Kompanie, 8./Ln.Abt.100, its Ju 52/3ms being gradually replaced by He 111s from early 1939. On 1 November 1939, the two units were officially redesignated 1. and 2./KGr 100 but its 3.*Staffel* was not established until 13 July 1940.

1938-August 1939



LEFT: Although this He 111 was flown by the meteorological reconnaissance unit, the Wekusta/Ob.d.L., this photograph clearly shows that the aircraft's original Stammkennzeichen (call-sign) HP+DO was painted out and replaced by the unit code T5+BU beneath the wing.



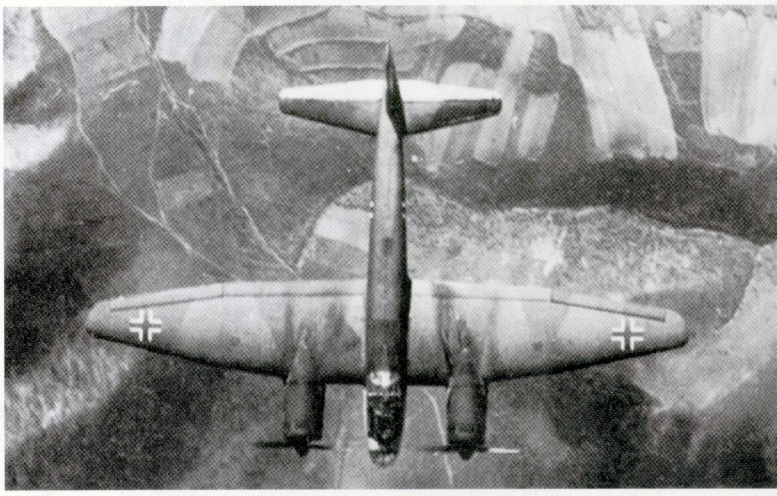


ABOVE AND ABOVE LEFT: A number of He 111 bombers and He 115 floatplanes under construction at the Heinkel factory at Rostock during 1939. Note that the aircraft already have their standard European camouflage and national insignia applied with their radio call signs (Stammkennzeichen) painted in white on the fuselage sides. The He 111 nearest the camera is W.Nr. 2921, NA+IT.

Detail of octane triangle

LEFT: This He 111 D-1 carries the standard pre-war camouflage scheme of dark brown, medium green and pale grey uppersurfaces with pale blue beneath. A yellow '87' fuel octane triangle appears below the cockpit, and it is interesting to note that only one spinner has been painted white.

1938-August 1939



ABOVE: This unusual view of a Ju 88 A in flight taken from directly above gives a clear indication of the dividing lines between the black green (RLM 70) and dark green (71) uppersurface camouflage. This scheme was introduced in 1939 replacing the old three-colour camouflage.

LEFT: This Ju 88 of I./KG 30 carries standard European camouflage of the period with temporary black undersurfaces for night bombing operations. The aircraft has the Gruppe's black diving eagle emblem painted on a white shield on the fuselage nose with the insignia of the 1.Staffel on the outer surfaces of both engine cowlings. The choice of the black umbrella beneath an orange gun sight on a white shield was a gibe at the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain.

BELOW: When it entered service in late 1939, the performance of the Ju 88 represented a great improvement over that of most earlier German bombers. This aircraft appears to have had all its markings painted out.

Poland and the *Sitzkrieg*
September 1939 – March 1940

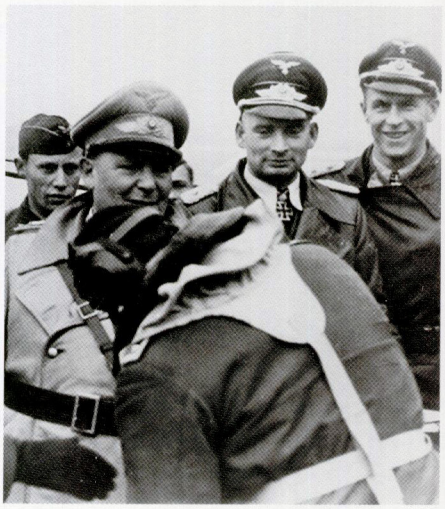
"There was much activity in the last days of August. Mussolini intervened, and there was hope that the great political powers would be able to negotiate the German demands. We were to learn that they did not wish to do so. That was the perpetuation of brute force under the cloak of the law that had been established at Versailles. Consequently we rose up against brute force. On the 1st of September 1939, therefore, I flew my He 111 at the head of a Staffel under the command of my Staffelkapitän, Martin Schumann, in the company of like-minded comrades, across the German-Polish border.

Hajo Herrmann, pilot with III./KG 4.
1 September 1939

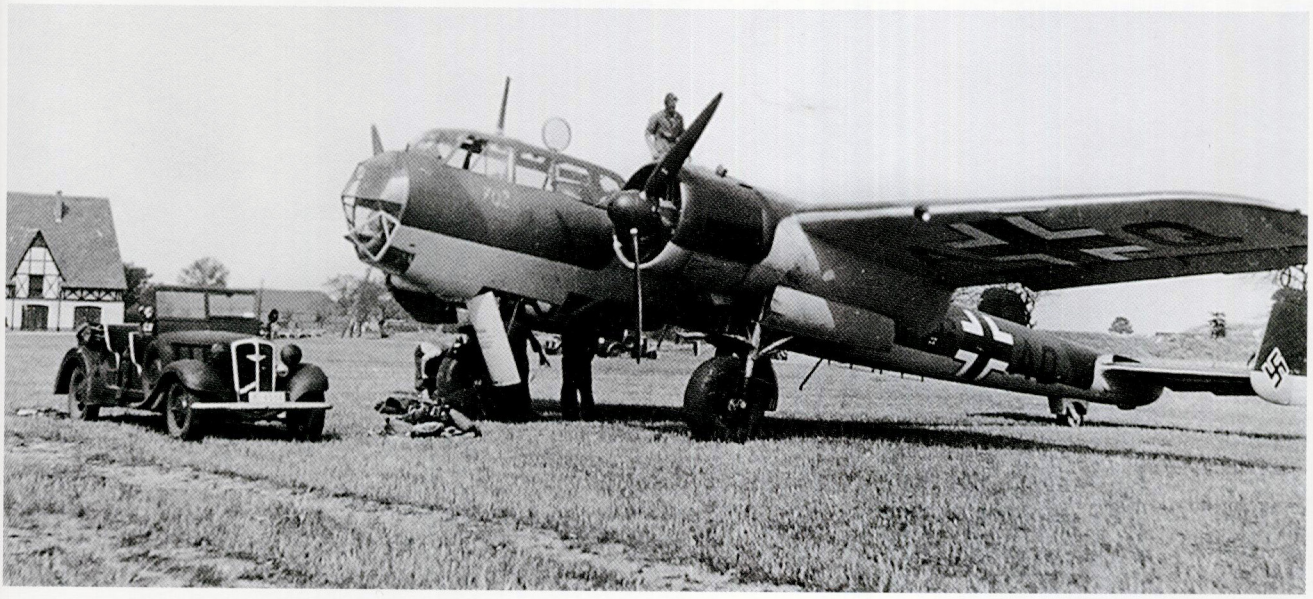
Hitler's next ambition was to invade Poland. He had long resented the 'Polish Corridor' which separated Germany from East Prussia and contained Danzig, an old German city given international status in 1919 and, furthermore, the occupation of Poland would provide him with a base from which to attack the hated Communist regime in the Soviet Union. Late in July 1939 he began to threaten the Poles, proposing the restoration of Danzig to Germany and the building of a road and railway across the Polish corridor. But, unlike the Czech Government, the Poles refused to be intimidated as, in addition to a Franco-Polish treaty which had been signed in 1921 and never revoked, they had the additional assurance of the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, that his country would guarantee immediate military aid to Poland should its independence be threatened.

The actual planning for an attack on Poland, code named 'Contingency *Weiss*' (White), had started as early as May 1939. The plan envisaged that the main thrust be launched from Silesia and Slovakia by *Heeresgruppe Süd* (Army Group South) under *Generaloberst* Gerd von Rundstedt with a subsidiary strike in the north across the 'Polish Corridor' by *Heeresgruppe Nord* under *Generaloberst* Fedor von Bock. Von Rundstedt's forces were to be supported in the air by *Luftflotte* 4 under *General der Flieger* Alexander Löhr and von Bock's by *Luftflotte* 1 under *General der Flieger* Albert Kesselring. The original *Luftwaffe* plan was for a massive strike on Polish airfields combined with another, *Unternehmen 'Wasserkante'* (Operation Seaside), on the capital, Warsaw, with the idea of destroying the Poles' political will.

After much diplomatic argument, during which Hitler became convinced that Britain would not honour her treaty with Poland, he ordered von Rundstedt to begin the invasion of Poland at 04.45 hours on 1 September 1939.



ABOVE: On 23 January 1944, Oberst Hajo Herrmann was awarded the Swords to the Ritterkreuz for his work in setting up the system of free-lance night fighting known as 'Wilde Sau' or 'Wild Boar'. Previously he had flown 320 bomber operations with KG 4 and KG 30, sinking 12 ships totalling 65,000 tons. He is shown here, later in the war, in the centre the photograph with Göring to the left and fighter ace, Oberst Hannes Trautloft, to the right.



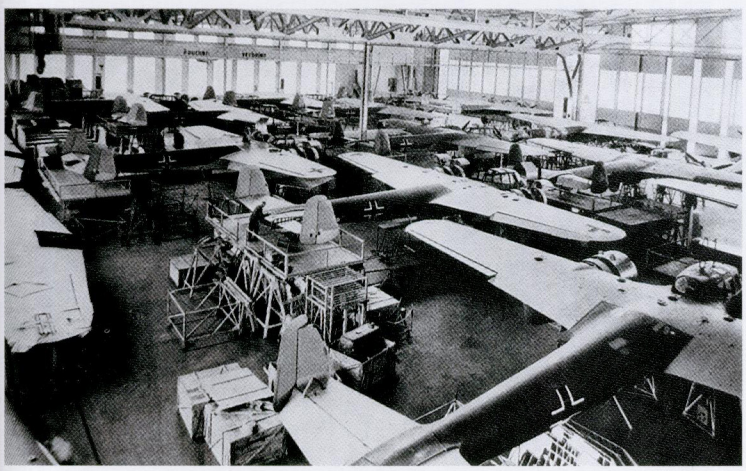
BELOW: It appears that this Do 17 Z has just been delivered to an operational unit and is undergoing a pre-flight check before the radio call-sign ?G+AQ is overpainted with its unit code.

Luftwaffe Bomber Order of Battle, 1 September 1939

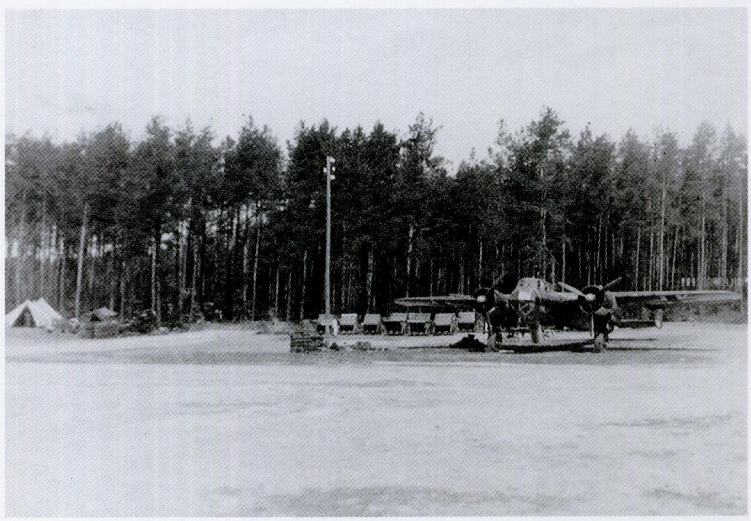
In the last two columns of figures below, the first row relates to the number of aircraft whichthe unit had on hand, the second row (in parentheses) to the number serviceable.

Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe		***Generalfeldmarschall* Herrmann Göring**	**Berlin**		
7.*Komp./Ln.Abt.*100	Ju 52/3m		Köthen	12	(?)
8.*Komp./Ln.Abt.*100	He 111 H		Köthen	8	(?)
Luftwaffenlehrdivision		***Generalmajor* Helmuth Förster**	**Greifswald**		
Lehrgeschwader 1					
Stab(K)/LG 1	He 111	*Oberst* Dr. Robert Knauss	Neuhausen	10	(4)
II.(K)Gruppe/LG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Kurt Dobratz	Powunden	41	(35)
III.(K)Gruppe/LG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Dr. Ernst Bormann	Powunden	40	(34)
Kampfgeschwader 2					
Stab/KG 2	Do 17 Z	*Oberst* Johannes Fink	Cottbus	9	(8)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 2	Do 17 Z	*Major* Werner Krahl	Liegnitz	37	(29
II.*Gruppe*/KG 2	Do 17 Z	*Major* Paul Weitkus	Liegnitz	35	(33)
Luftflotte 1		***General der Flieger* Albert Kesselring**	**Henningsholm near Stettin**		
1.*Fliegerdivision*		***Generalleutnant* Ulrich Grauert**	**Schönfeld/Crossinsee**		
Kampfgeschwader 1					
Stab/KG 1	He 111 H	*Obstlt.* Ulrich Kessler	Kolberg	7	(1)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 152	He 111 H	*Major* Benno Kosch	Pinnow-Plathe	38	(32)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 1	He 111 E	*Obstlt.* Krauss	Kolberg	37	(32)
Kampfgeschwader 26					
Stab/KG 26	He 111 H	*Gen.Major* Hans Siburg	Gabbert	8	(8)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H	*Obstlt.* von Bushe	Gabbert	?	(?)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 53 Crossinsee	He 111 H	*Obstlt.* Karl Mehnert	Schönefeld/	32	(29)
Kampfgeschwader 27					
Stab/KG 27	He 111 P	*Oberst* Hans Behrendt	Werneuchen	6	(3)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	*Obstlt.* Graumnitz	Werneuchen	34	(28)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	*Major* De Salengre Drabbe	Neuhardenberg	26	(18)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 27 Neumark	He 111 P	*Major* Andreas Nielsen	Königsberg/	28	(20)
***Luftwaffenkommando* Ostpreussen**		***Generalleutnant* Wilhelm Wimmer**	**Königsberg/Ballith**		
Kampfgeschwader 3					
Stab/KG 3	Do 17 Z	*Oberst* Wolfgang von Chamier-Glisczinski	Elbing	9	(7)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 3	Do 17 Z	*Major* Munske	Heiligenbeil	36	(25)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 3	Do 17 Z	*Obstlt.* Neuhüttler	Heiligenbeil	28	(20)
Luftflotte 2		***General der Flieger* Hellmuth Felmy**	**Braunschweig**		
3.*Fliegerdivision*		***Generalmajor* Richard Putzier**	**Münster**		
Kampfgeschwader 54					
Stab/KG 54	He 111 D & P	*Oberst* Walter Lackner	Fritzlar	9	(8)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 54	He 111 P	*Major* Otto Höhne	Fritzlar	36	(36)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 28	He 111 P	*Major* Rudolf Koester	Gütersloh	35	(35)
I.Gruppe/KG 25	Ju 88 A	*Hptm.* Helmut Pohle	Jever (attached)	18	(15)
4.*Fliegerdivision*		***General der Flieger* Alfred Keller**	**Braunschweig**		
I.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H	*Major* Walter Loebel	Blankensee	32	(32)

***Kampfgeschwader* 55**					
Stab/KG 55	He 111 P	*Gen. Major* Wilhelm Süssmann	Wesendorf	9	(6)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 55	He 111 P	*Major* Max Heyna	Dedelstorf	33	(27)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 55	He 111 P	*Obstlt.* Otto von Lachemair	Wesendorf	31	(22)
Luftflotte 3	***General der Flieger* Hugo Sperrle**		**Roth near Nürnberg**		
5.*Fliegerdivision*	***Generalmajor* Robert Ritter von Greim**		**Gersthofen near Augsburg**		
***Kampfgeschwader* 51**					
Stab/KG 51	He 111 H	*Oberst* Dr. Johann-Volkmar Fisser	Landsberg	9	(6)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 51	He 111 H	*Obstlt.* Hans Korte	Landsberg	36	(36)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 51	He 111 H	*Oberst* Alois Stoeckl	Memmingen	36	(34)
6.*Fliegerdivision*	***Generaloberst* Otto Dessloch**		**Frankfurt/Main**		
***Kampfgeschwader* 53**					
Stab/KG 53	He 111 H	*Oberst* Erich Stahl	Schwäbisch Hall	6	(6)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	*Obstlt.* Kohlbach	Schwäbisch Hall	32	(32)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	*Major* Friedrich Edler von Braun	Giebelstadt	35	(34)
Luftflotte 4	***Generaloberst* Alexander Löhr**		**Wien**		
2.*Fliegerdivision*	***Generalleutnant* Bruno Loerzer**		**Frankfurt/Main**		
***Kampfgeschwader* 4**					
Stab/KG 4	He 111 P	*Oberst* Martin Fiebig	Oels	6	(5)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	*Obstlt.* Nikolaus-Wolfgang Maier	Langenau	31	(28)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	*Obstlt.* Erdmann	Oels	32	(27)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	*Major* Evers	Langenau	33	(21)
***Kampfgeschwader* 76**					
Stab/KG 76	Do 17 Z	Oberst Paul Schultheiss	Breslau	9	(9)
Schongarten					
I.*Gruppe*/KG 76	Do 17 Z	Obstlt. Stephan Fröhlich	Breslau	36	(33)
Schongarten					
III.*Gruppe*/KG 76	Do 17 Z	Major Hans Hofmann	Rosenborn	39	(35)
***Kampfgeschwader* 77**					
Stab/KG 77	Do 17 E/F	Oberst Heinrich Seywald	Grottkau	6	(6)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 E	Major Balcke	Grottkau	32	(29)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 E	Obstlt. Augustin	Grottkau	32	(32)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 E	Obstlt. Wolf von Stutterheim	Brieg	34	(24)

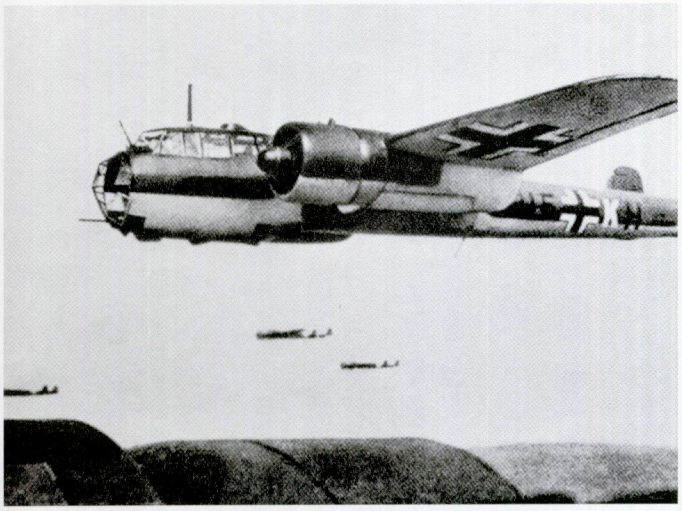


ABOVE: A batch of Do 17 Zs under construction. At this stage most of the basic camouflage and national insignia have already been applied. It only remained for the operational unit to which they were delivered to apply its own identity markings.



ABOVE: A Do 17 Z stands idle on a German airfield after the successful conclusion of the attack on Poland in September 1939.

September 1939-March 1940



ABOVE: A formation of Do 17 Zs from 1./KG 2 in flight. The aircraft nearest the camera, U5+KH, is typical of Luftwaffe bomber aircraft of the period with black green and dark green uppersurfaces camouflage with pale blue beneath. By this time, the underwing Balkenkreuz had been considerably enlarged in dimensions.

Because of thick clammy fog, only four *Kampfgruppen* managed to take off on time. One of the first attacks was carried out by the Ju 87-equipped 3./St.G 1 which attempted to prevent the destruction of the Tczew railway bridge over the Vistula by dive-bombing a blockhouse from which the Polish demolition charges were controlled. However, despite the dive-bombing and a follow up attack by a *Staffel* of Do 17 Z-2s from III./KG 3 based at Heiligenbeil, the bridge was destroyed.

Much of the effort of the horizontal bomber force was, however, directed against Polish Air Force (PLW) bases, aircraft from *Luftflotte* 1 flying five major attacks during the morning of 1 September, followed by a further 13 in the afternoon. Again fog over East Prussia slowed operations, although I./KG 1 did manage to bomb the naval base at Putzig-Rahmel. As the mist cleared, I./KG 152 attacked Thorn airfield while II./KG 26 bombed the rail installations at Posen-Luwica. II./KG 3 hit an ammunition dump south of Graudenz and I./KG 53 struck Gnesen airfield. A little later, both *Gruppen* of KG 2 bombed Biala-Podlaska, Lida and Plozk. *Luftflotte* 4 also directed over half its sorties against airfield targets. For example 60 He 111s from I./ and III./KG 4 dropped 48 tonnes of bombs on airfields around Kraków and just afterwards, Do 17s from III./KG 77 streaked in at a height of barely 50 m (160 ft) and added to the carnage. A total of 28 Polish second-line aircraft were destroyed, but several of the Dorniers were damaged by splinters from their own bombs. Meanwhile II./KG 77 bombed Krosno and Moderowka and later, as the weather improved, KG 76 struck bases at Kielce, Lodz, Radom, Skierniewice, Tomaszów and Tschentochau. II./KG 4 then dropped 22 tonnes of bombs on L'vov, after completing a 480 km (300 mile) approach flight.

Such was the activity on the first day of the operation that Göring postponed '*Wasserkante*' until next day, but despite this, II.(K)/LG 1 and KG 27, escorted by the Bf 110s of I.(Z)/LG 1, did manage to launch a raid on Warsaw. As the one hundred or so He 111s approached the city at 3,000 m (10,000 ft) they were set upon by Polish PZL 7 and PZL 11 fighters and a furious battle developed. In the 40 minute action, the escorting Bf 110s shot down ten Polish fighters, but six He 111s were also destroyed and no bombs were dropped on the city.

ABOVE: The most prolific Polish Air Force fighter was the ageing PZL P.11c. Many of them were destroyed on the ground by the attentions of the Kampfflieger and those that managed to get into the air were quickly shot down by the German fighter escorts.

Göring hoped to mount the '*Wasserkante*' operation on the following day, but the need for the Luftwaffe to support German ground troops again delayed its execution. Over eighty He 111s from KG 4, led by its *Kommodore*, *Oberst* Martin Fiebig, carried out a major assault against the three airfields around Deblin during which 180 tonnes of bombs were dropped. Although some training aircraft and support buildings were destroyed, the attack failed to prevent the runways being used by PLW units. Other raids on airfields around Poznan and Warsaw were also carried out on 2 September, the *Kampfflieger* flying a total of 1,247 sorties during the day.

Next morning the *Luftwaffe* High Command ordered that most bomber operations again be flown in support of German troops, although a few attacks were to be made against the Polish aircraft industry, including the PZL factory. During the afternoon, forty Polish bombers struck at the armoured spearheads from the 1. and 4. *Panzer* Divisions near Radomsko causing heavy losses, but an attempt to repeat this success next day resulted in the loss of 11 Polish aircraft. By 6 September, the front-line fighter strength of the PLW's Pursuit Brigade had been reduced to 16 serviceable aircraft and the Polish bomber force had lost almost half its machines.

BELOW: Oberst Martin Fiebig (left), Kommodore of KG 253 (later KG 4) from 1 July 1938 to 10 May 1940, talks to General der Flieger Hellmuth Felmy around the time of the invasion of Poland.

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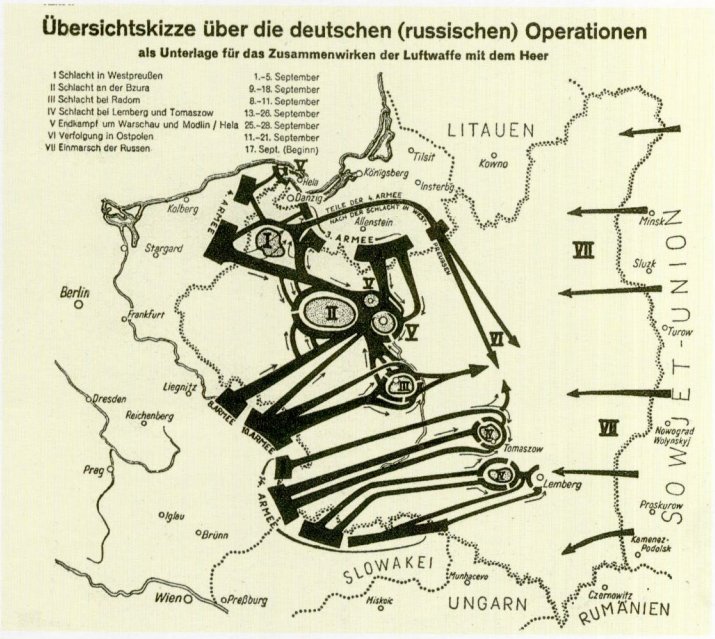
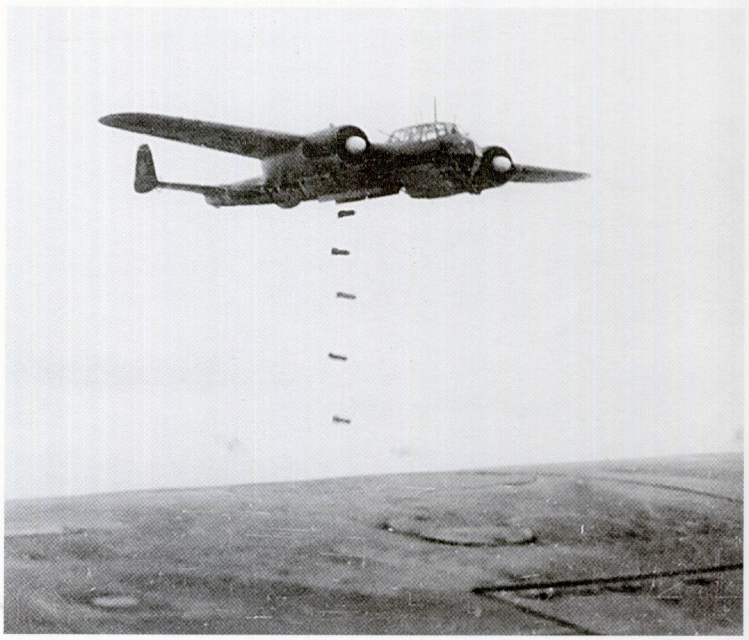
On 4 September, bombers from KG 4, 55, 76 and 77 were heavily engaged against rail targets, and during the next few days the bomber force concentrated on flying support operations for the German Army. From 8 September, for example, Polish troop concentrations around Ilza were heavily bombed by I. and II./KG 55 and I./KG 77, these units in concert with five ground attack *Gruppen* annihilating the opposition in the next two days. These units were later joined by I./KG 1, I./KG 2, II./KG 26 and I./KG 53, but by 12 September Polish opposition had been reduced to such a level that the *Luftwaffe* ordered several units back to Germany, while others were gathered to at last undertake '*Wasserkante*', the bombing of Warsaw. Already KG 77 had struck at railways near the city, and during the night of 10/11 September, Ln.Abt.100 (later KGr 100) led a number of precision bombing sorties using its X-*Verfahren* radio navigation system.

The first major attack came on 13 September, when 183 sorties were made against the city by several *Gruppen* including two *Staffeln* from KG 4 which dropped a mixture of high explosive and incendiaries on the Ghetto area. Three days later Warsaw had been surrounded by German troops and after attempts to persuade the Poles to surrender the city failed, I./KG 4 was called upon to drop hundreds of thousands of leaflets on the city. These told the citizens to evacuate the city pending a possible bombing attack. This and other leaflet raids were ignored, and at 08.00 hours on 25 September over 400 *Luftwaffe*

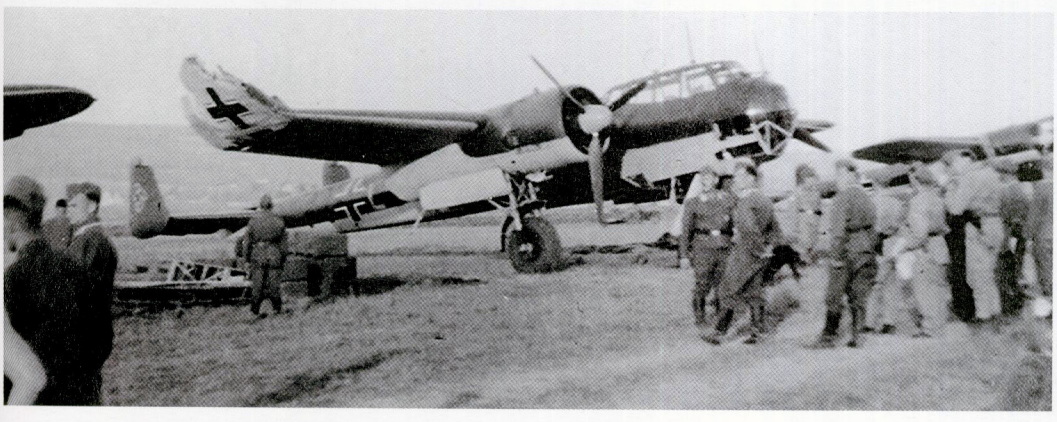
ABOVE: Troops of the SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler Division advance through a Polish town shattered by German bombing.

BELOW: An overview of the German (Russian) Operations. This contemporary German map of the time shows the the air war on Poland and the various stages reached at specific dates. Note that the Russian operations are also shown since Russia invaded Poland from the east starting on 17 September 1939.





ABOVE: A photograph taken from an aircraft in the same formation shows a Do 17 Z of KG 76 dropping its string of bombs.



LEFT: Quite how the damage occurred to the starboard wing of this Do 17 Z, F1+LP of 6./KG 76, is a mystery. It appears to have been lined up with other aircraft, and could possibly have been struck by passing vehicle. The national insignia are of the early type with narrow white outlines, and the aircraft's individual letter is painted yellow as are the spinners.

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bomber and dive-bomber aircraft took off to bomb the city. In 1,776 sorties some 560 tonnes of high explosive and 72 tonnes of incendiary bombs were dropped, many of the latter, fanned by strong north-easterly winds, also caused casualties among the nearby German positions. This raid, together with that on the 13th, led to the death of 40,000 Poles, the destruction of ten per cent of the city's buildings and damage to a further 40 per cent. German losses were three aircraft, two of them Ju 52s. Following this devastating blow, Poland surrendered on 27 September.

Following the invasion of Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939. The early months of the conflict were characterised by an attempt by both sides to persuade each other of the justness of their respective positions, before actions led to unrestricted warfare. As part of this attempt the bomber forces of both sides carried out a series of leaflet dropping raids during the winter months of 1939/40, but perhaps because of its concentration on the invasion of Poland, the *Luftwaffe* was not as quick off the mark to begin these as the Allied air forces. Its first series of '*Papierflug*' sorties were carried out on the night of 5/6 November 1939, with five leaflet raids by KG 51 and KG 53 over France. Casualties during these sorties were relatively light, many being caused by faulty navigation or bad weather rather than enemy action.

As a result of attacks by the RAF on German Naval ships near Wilhelmshaven and off Brunsbüttel in the Elbe Estuary from 4 September, an order already existed for similar operations be carried out by the *Luftwaffe* against the Royal Navy. As Hitler's War Directive No.2 stated:

"Attacks upon English naval forces at naval bases or on the high seas (including the English Channel), and on definitely identified troop transports, will only be made in the event of English air attacks on similar targets and where there are particularly good prospects of success. This applies also to action by the Fleet Air Arm. I reserve to myself the decision about attacks on the English homeland and on merchant shipping."

At this time, only two *Luftwaffe* bomber *Gruppen*, I. and II./KG 26, were available for such missions, the latter having returned from operations against Poland following an order issued on 11 September. Two bolster these meagre forces, one other unit, I./KG 25 (redesignated I./KG 30 on 22 September) was available though it was still undergoing training with its new Ju 88s. In fact most of the *Gruppe* under Hptm. Helmut Pohle had been withdrawn inland from Jever on the North Sea coast to Greifswald and Hagenow. Only a small component under *Lt.* Walter Storp remained operational at Westerland on the island of Sylt.

LEFT AND ABOVE: When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, KG 1 was converting from the He 111 E to the H-series. These aircraft of the Geschwader Stab, have the emblem of KG 1 (the crest of the Hindenburg family) painted on both sides of the fuselage nose.

The emblem of KG 1 the 'Hindenburg' family crest

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One of the first operations by these three *Gruppen* took place on 26 September when nine He 111s from 1./KG 26 under *Hptm.* Martin Vetter and four Ju 88s from the *Schwarm* of I./KG 30 under *Lt.* Storp took off from 12.50 hours to attack a British flotilla comprising the battleships *Nelson* and *Rodney*, the battle-cruisers *Hood* and *Renown* and the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*. One of the Ju 88s, piloted by *Gef.* Carl Francke, spotted the *Ark Royal* and immediately went into a diving attack, but clouds prevented him from dropping his bombs. He then turned and launched a second attack in spite of the intense flak, dropping his single 2,200 lb SC 1000 bomb close to the ship. He was unable to see whether the attack was successful, but on returning to Westerland he was hailed as having sunk the carrier. This was to prove false, but it nonetheless was touted by the German propaganda machine.

On 9 October 1939 Hitler issued Directive Nr.6 which called for the invasion of France and the Low Countries under the code name of 'Contingency *Gelb*' (Yellow) should a peace offer to Britain fail. Paragraph 4 stated that:

"The Luftwaffe will prevent attacks by the Anglo-French Air Forces on our Army and will give all necessary direct support to its advance. It is also important to prevent the establishment of Anglo-French air bases and the landing of British forces in Belgium and Holland."

The victorious conclusion of the Polish campaign, and the need to bolster Luftwaffe bomber forces in the West resulted in KG 27 being transferred and placed under the control of *General der Flieger* Hellmuth Felmy's *Luftflotte* 2 while *General der Flieger* Hugo Sperrle's *Luftflotte* 3 received KG 1, 4 and 76. By 1 December, *Luftwaffe* bomber strength comprised the following aircraft types:

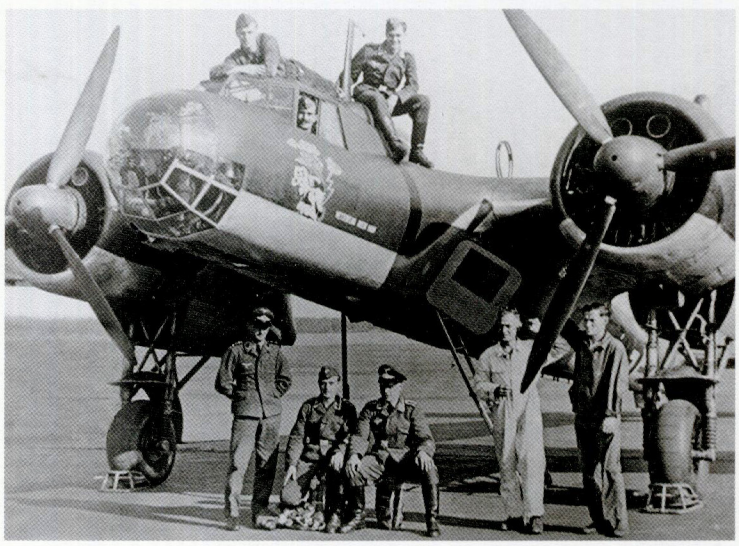
He 111 H	515	(375)
He 111 P	372	(326)
Do 17 Z	346	(265)
Ju 88 A	25	(16)
Fw 200 C	6	(2)

Around the same time, on 11 October 1939, some of the old headquarter designations were changed, 1., 2., 4. and 5.*Fliegerdivision* becoming I., II., IV. and V. *Fliegerkorps* respectively, the VIII. *Fliegerkorps* having been formed on the same date from *Fliegerführer* zbV.

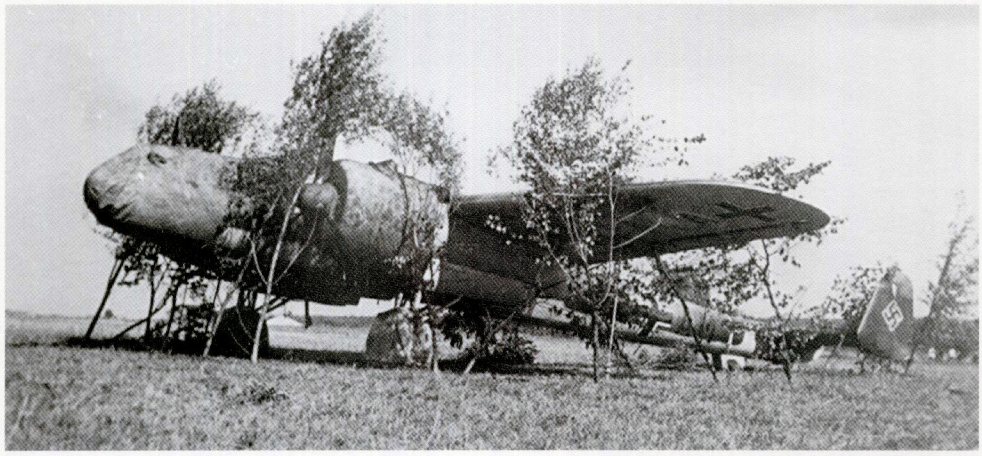
Following the rejection of a peace offer by Hitler to Britain on 12 October, German operations began to be directed against Royal Naval bases in Scotland. As his *Direktive* Nr.7 ordered: 'The attacks on English naval units at sea and in naval bases are to be kept up wherever a suitable military opportunity offers in close liaison between the *Kriegsmarine* and the *Luftwaffe*.' One of the first of these attacks was carried out on 16 October. At this time much of the Home Fleet was in the process of moving bases following the sinking of the battleship, *Royal Oak* in Scapa Flow by the German submarine *U-47* two days before. The air attack commenced with *Hptm.* Pohle, leading nine Ju 88s from I./KG 30, dive-bombing the cruiser HMS *Southampton*, but although one of his SC 500 bombs actually went straight through the ship, it failed to explode. As Pohle pulled out of his dive, he was attacked by a Spitfire of 603 Squadron and his Ju 88 shot down. The only survivor of the attack, he was picked up by a trawler and taken prisoner. This was the first enemy aircraft to be destroyed by Fighter Command. Shortly afterwards, *Lt.* Horst von Riesen attacked the destroyer HMS *Mohawk* causing some casualties, but he too was shot up by Spitfires. Despite loosing an engine he managed to return to base. Next day, the new *Kommandeur* of I./KG 30, *Hptm.* Fritz Doench, led an attack by four Ju 88s on Scapa Flow. Despite intense flak, they managed to damage the old battleship *Iron Duke* which was subsequently beached. One Ju 88 was hit by flak and crash landed on the island of Hoy.

Several operations were also carried out by KG 26, the *Geschwader Stab* losing an He 111 H, coded 1H+JA, which was shot down near Edinburgh on 28 October. However, it was not until 17 December that KG 26 actually managed to sink a British vessel.

BELOW: This Do 17 P-1 was operated by one of the Luftwaffe's Wekusta or Wettererkundung-staffeln (meteorological reconnaissance squadrons) which performed valuable service in providing weather information prior to bombing raids. This Do 17 P carries an emblem comprising a Father Christmas with a white skeleton on his back.



September 1939-March 1940

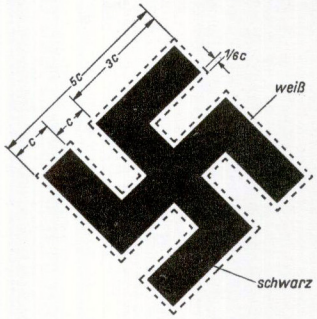


LEFT AND OPPOSITE PAGE: Camouflage did not always comprise the aircraft's paint scheme. These Do 17s of 4./KG 3 with protective covers over their nose sections have camouflage netting and undergrowth placed over them to protect them from prowling enemy reconnaissance aircraft. The photograph left shows a Do 17 coded 5K+JM, while the photo opposite is 5K+AM.

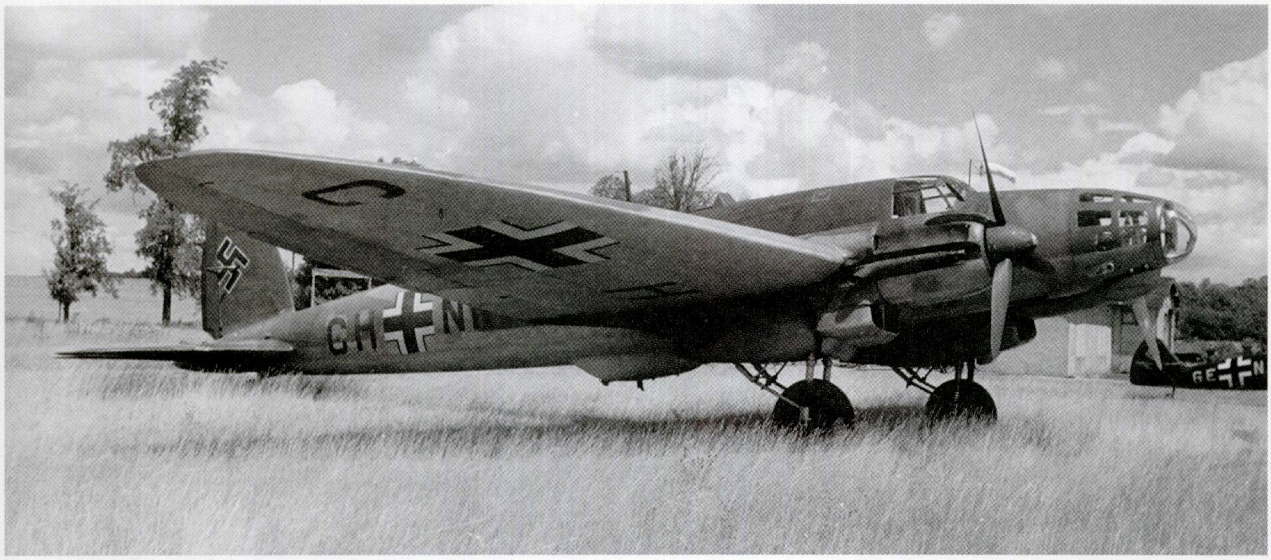
Abmessungen

Größe 5c	315	(400)	500	(630)	800	
c	63	80	100	126	160	
3c	189	240	300	378	480	
1/6c	10	13	17	21	27	

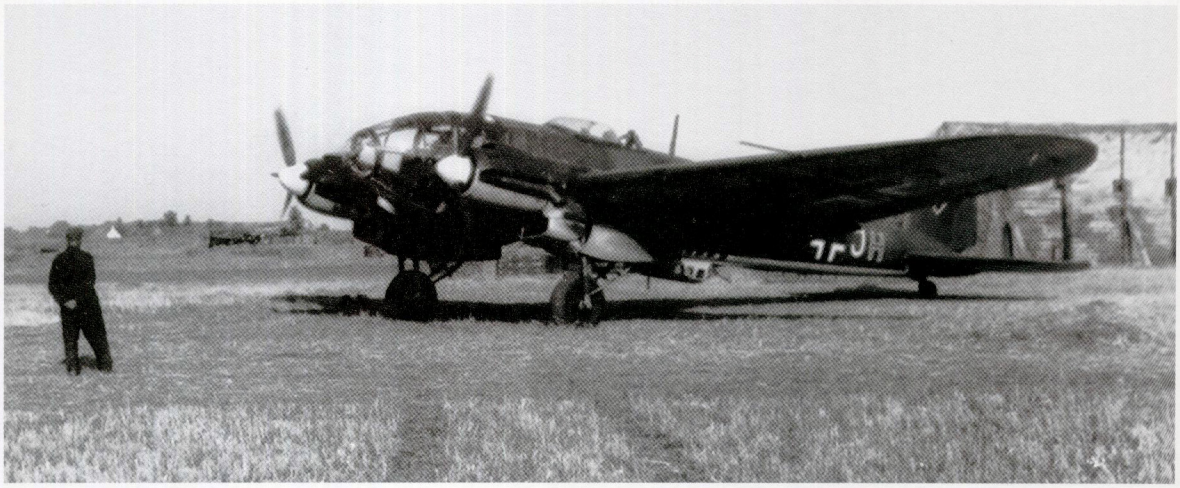
Auf Sichtschutzanstrich Farbton 70÷75 fällt schwarzes Innenteil des Hakenkreuzes fort.



LEFT: Standard proportions and measurements of a Hakenkreuz taken from an official document.

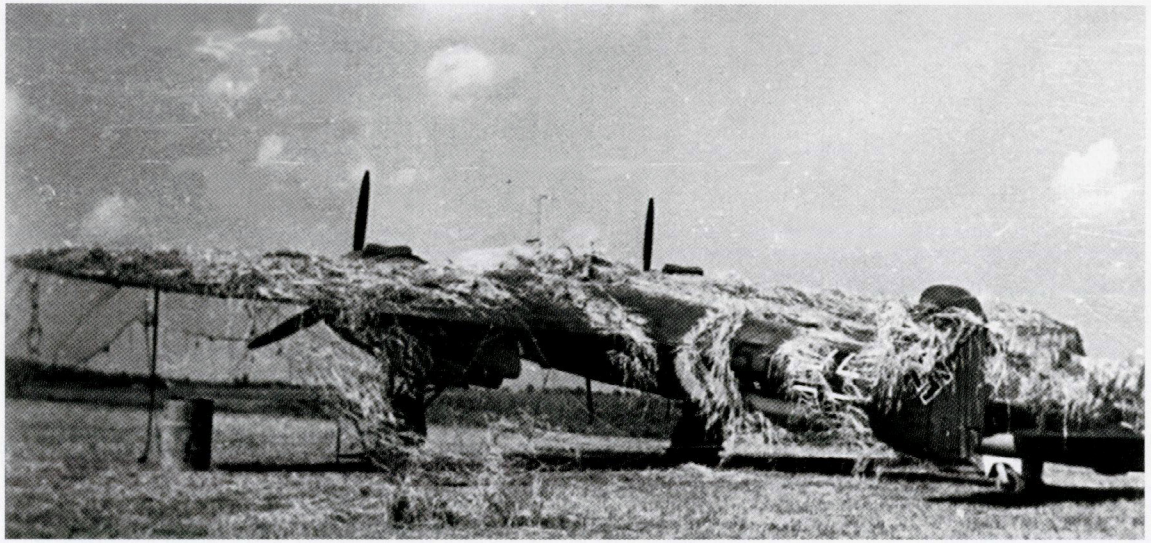


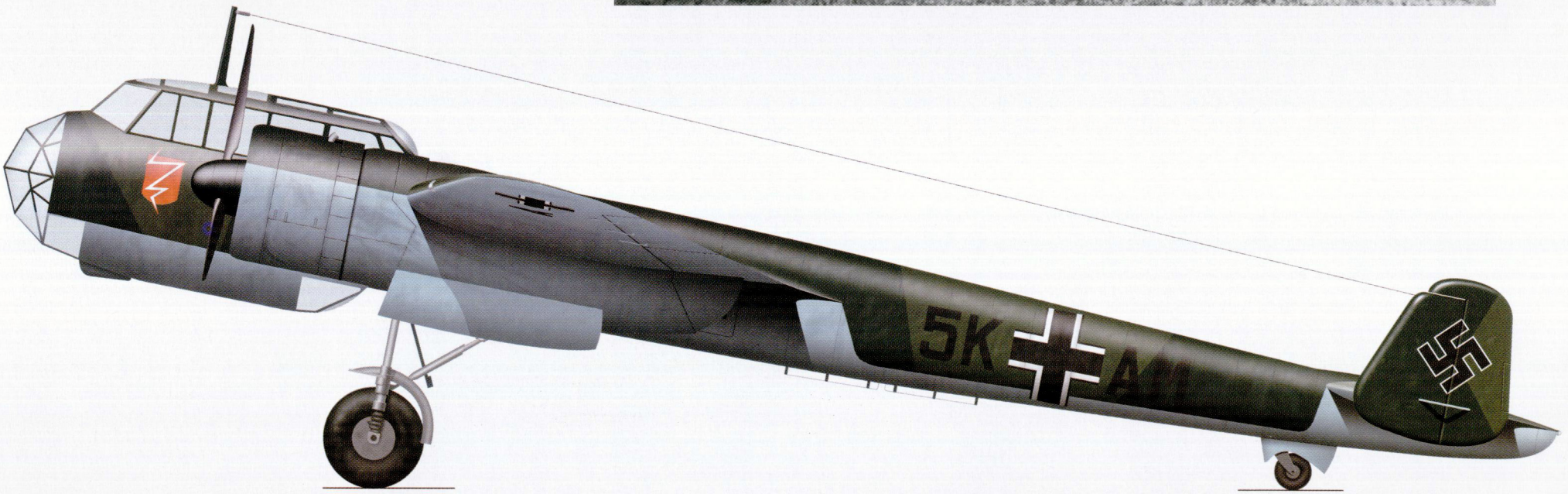
LEFT: A number of He 111 C airliners were used as transport and liaison aircraft during the war. The variant differed in having a 'solid' nose and seats for ten passengers. However this aircraft, CH+NR, has been converted with a glazed nose and has rather unusual camouflage, possibly a variant of the early 61, 62, 63 upper-surface scheme. Note the Bf 108 in the background.



RIGHT: Several He 111 units were involved in the invasion of Poland. This aircraft, probably from the 1.Staffel of KG 53 'Legion Condor', has its individual letter 'J' in white but, unusually, the Staffel letter 'H' is also edged in white. A common practice was the painting of the spinners from this squadron in white.

II./KG 3 badge





Dornier Do 17 Z-2 of 4./KG 3 '*Blitz*', May 1940
Although *Luftwaffe* bomber camouflage was fairly standard during late 1939/early 1940 there were considerably differences between *Geschwader* as to how their unit codes were applied. This aircraft from 4./KG 3, has only its individual letter 'A' repeated beneath the wing.

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One of the problems which now faced the *Luftwaffe* bomber force was that of attacking British shipping over long distances, a task for which it had never been designed. In September 1939, the Chief of Air Staff, *General* Hans Jeschonnek, asked *Major* Edgar Petersen to look for an aircraft to fulfil this role pending the proposed introduction of the He 177 in 1942. Petersen remembers:

"I looked around for a suitable aircraft in Germany. There was the Junkers Ju 90, but there were only two of these available and no production line had been established. On the other hand the Focke-Wulf Company had six four-engined Fw 200s ready for delivery to Japan. I took these, and a further six standard Fw 200 B airliners and with these I set up my long-range squadron (Fernflugstaffel) at Bremen on 1 October 1939."

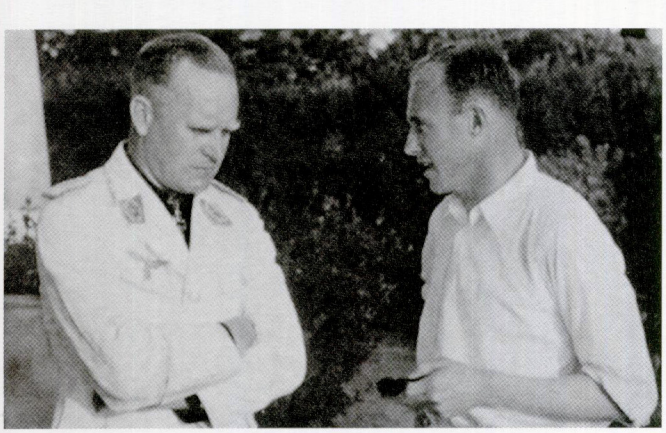
This squadron, which received the designation 1./KG 40, was expanded by the addition of the *Gruppe Stab* and 2./KG 40 on 1 May and 3./KG 40 on 1 June 1940, the whole then forming the I.*Gruppe*.

During the winter of 1939/40 a number of other new *Gruppen* were added to the *Luftwaffe's* bomber force and around the same period six more *Gruppen* were equipped or re-equipped with the Ju 88. These were II. and III./KG 30, II.(K)/LG 1, III./KG 4, I. and II./KG 51.

Operations by German bombers against British shipping continued during the early months of 1940. On 9 January 1940 KG 26 began flying sorties with very small numbers of aircraft, bombing a total of 12 ships. Three days later the *Geschwader* attacked several unarmed and anchored light vessels, sinking one. This did nothing to help relations between the *Luftwaffe* and the German Navy who feared this operation would provoke reprisals. On 29 January KG 26 attacked the British convoy FS 83 but was driven off. Other individual sorties proved quite successful, 36 ships being bombed of which four were sunk, three abandoned and 13 damaged. The relationship between the German air and naval forces was further disrupted on the last day of January when 4. and 6./KG 26 bombed a German destroyer force by mistake, sinking the *Leberecht Maas* and causing the *Max Schultz* to hit a mine. Hitler was understandably furious.

On 2 February, II./KG 26 transferred from its permanent base at Westerland to Schleswig to attack a British convoy which had been report due to sail from Sweden the next day. During the action that followed an He 111, W.Nr. 3232, piloted by *Uffz.* Hermann Wilms, was shot down by a Hurricane of 43 Squadron near Whitby. Of the crew of four, only the pilot and the gunner survived, the latter badly injured. Six days later another He 111 H, 1H+EN, W.Nr. 6353 of 5./KG 26 was on its way to attack shipping in the Firth of Forth when it was intercepted by a Spitfire of 602 Squadron. Fire from the British fighter punctured its oil tanks and the aircraft made an emergency landing at North Berwick Law in Scotland, tipping on to its nose but otherwise suffering little damage. The aircraft was subsequently repaired and operated by 1426 (Enemy Aircraft) Flight of the RAF. In this attack the minesweeper, HMS *Sphinx* was sunk plus four minesweeping trawlers. Yet another KG 26 Heinkel was shot down by a Hurricane of 43 Squadron on 22 February. This time the aircraft broke up and plunged into the sea. There were no survivors. From 27 February the RAF gave permanent fighter cover to coastal sailings, which further helped curtail any successes that the *Luftwaffe* bomber force might have achieved.

On 6 March 1940, KG 30, now expanded to *Geschwader* strength, flew its most successful operation of the period when it heavily damaged the cruiser HMS *Norfolk* and the repaired HMS *Iron Duke* which had now been relegated to gunnery training. Fourteen days later the *Staffelkapitän* of 6./KG 26, *Hptm.* Otto Andreas, was shot down by RAF fighters, and also during the same month a Heinkel He 111 of the III.*Gruppe Stab*, 1H+AC, which crashed in England revealed details of another radio bomb aiming device, known as *Knickebein*, to British Intelligence. This device sent out two adjacent beams, the left hand one consisting of Morse dots, the right hand one dashes. When the two beams overlapped a continuous signal was heard which confirmed that the aircraft was on the correct approach. III./KG 26 was responsible for developing this device, just as KGr 100 was for X-*Verfahren,* and a series of experimental missions with the X-*Verfahren* device had already been undertaken over England by *Obstlt.* Joachim Stollbrock's KGr 100 which had been formed from Ln.Abt.100 on 18 November 1939. On 15 December the unit had transferred from Kothen to Rotenburg/Wümme near Bremen and made its first sortie over Britain five days later when *Oblt.* Hermann Schmidt, *Kapitän* of the



BELOW: The Kommandeur of I./KG 40, Major Edgar Petersen (left), in conversation with the Kapitän of 2./KG 40, Hptm. Fritz Fliegel. Petersen took over as Kommodore of the unit in April 1941, replacing Obstlt. Giesse, and led it until September of that year when he was replaced by Obstlt. Dr. Georg Pasewaldt.

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first *Staffel*, flew at an altitude of 7,000 m (23,000 ft) over London. The unit suffered its first casualty on 18 January 1940 when *Uffz.* Alfred Quägwer was killed in a landing accident, but a far more serious blow came on 13 February when Stollbrock and his crew were shot down by a Spitfire of 54 Squadron over the Thames Estuary. His place was taken by *Hptm.* Artur von Casimir.

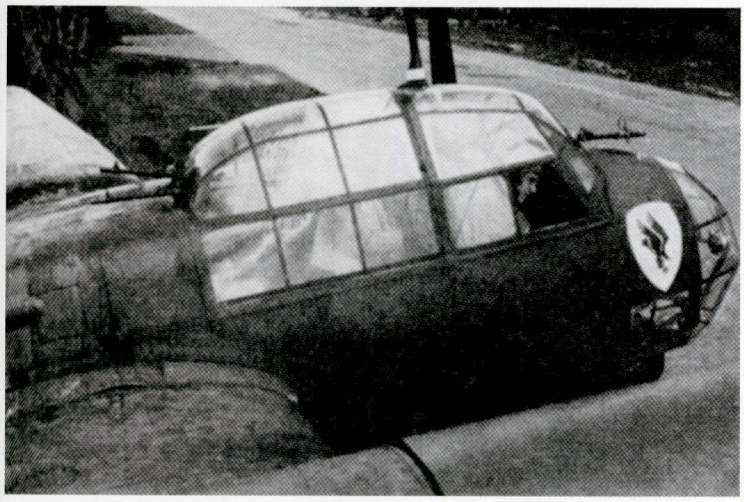
In one of the last operations before *Weserübung*, the German invasion of Norway and Denmark, on 3 April 1940, an He 111 of KG 26 was shot down by a Spitfire of 41 Squadron, off Redcar in Yorkshire. The Heinkel ditched into the sea, but the Spitfire too crashed.

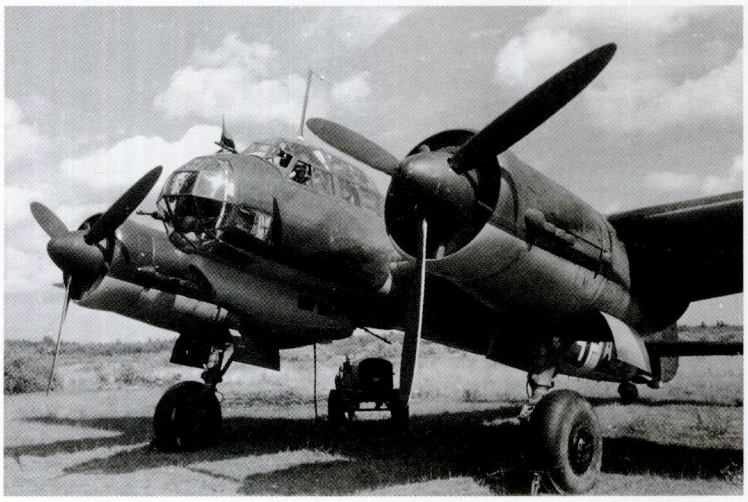
Apart from these conventional anti-shipping operations, the *Luftwaffe* bomber force also became engaged in minelaying sorties. These had initially been carried out by ancient He 59 biplane floatplanes, but in December 1939, 1./KG 40 and 7./KG 26 also undertook such tasks. Bad weather prevented further operations until February 1940 when a special minelaying command, 9.*Fliegerdivision* was formed under *Gen.Major* Joachim Coeler. Initially only one bomber unit, KG 4, was assigned to his command, but on 10 March the I.*Gruppe* was trained to undertake aerial supply missions and its replacement, I./KG 1, returned to conventional bombing ten days later together with III./KG 4. Coeler was then left with only KGr 126 which had just been formed from the first III./KG 26.

During the Polish campaign, the *Luftwaffe* had lost 285 aircraft of the 1,939 committed. 239 airmen were killed with a further 88 missing, one-fifth being officers. By comparison the *Luftwaffe* lost a further 520 airmen and 298 missing during the '*Sitzkrieg*' (sitting war) period from 1 September 1939 to the end of March 1940.

BELOW: The diving eagle badge of the 'Adler' (Eagle) Geschwader, KG 30, was to become a familiar sight in Norway from the time of the invasion of that country in April 1940. The unit was to undertake many operations against British convoys attempting to supply Soviet forces via the Arctic Ocean to the ice-free port of Murmansk.

BELOW: After operational testing by Erprobungs-kommando 88, the first Ju 88 Gruppe, I./KG 25, was formed at Jever under the command of Hptm. Helmut Pohle in August 1939. On 22 September this unit was redesignated I./KG 30.



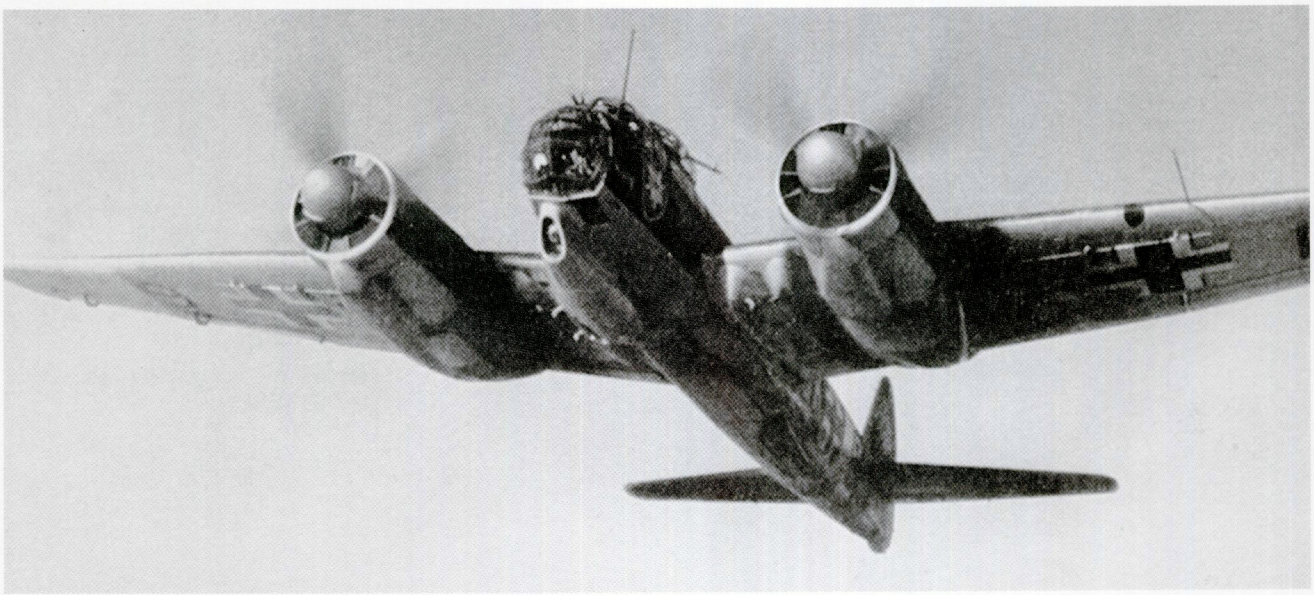


LEFT: This He 111 P piloted by Lt. Scholz of 2./KG 27 took part in bombing raids on Polish rail and road communications in September 1939 from its forward base at Neukuhren. The aircraft, '1G+EK', carries Scholz' personal insignia, a rather crudely painted clown, with the individual letter 'E' in the Staffel colour red.

September 1939-March 1940

Luftwaffe bomber units established September 1939-May 1940

1 Sep 1939	1 May 1940	Notes	Code
	I.(K)/LG 1	Newly formed at Jesau in September 1939	L1
II.(K)/LG 1	II.(K)/LG 1		L1
III.(K)/LG 1	III.(K)/LG 1		L1
I./KG 1	I./KG 1		V4
I./KG 152	II./KG 1	I./KG 152 was originally to become I./LG 3, but this plan was abandoned and it became II./KG 1 on 18 September 1939	V4
	III./KG 1	Newly formed on 1 March 1940	V4
I./KG 2	I./KG 2		U5
II./KG 2	II./KG 2		U5
	III./KG 2	Newly formed on 1 March 1940 at Illesheim	U5
	I./KG 3	Newly formed on 1 March 1940	5K
II./KG 3	II./KG 3		5K
III./KG 3	III./KG 3		5K
I.KG 4	I.KG 4		5J
II.KG 4	II.KG 4		5J
III.KG 4	III.KG 4		5J
I./KG 26	I./KG 26		1H
II./KG 26	II./KG 26		1H
	III./KG 26	7./KG 26 26 formed in January 1940,the remainder of the *Gruppe* on 1 March 1940, became KGr 126 in mid-March 1940. A new III./KG 26 was then formed from I./KG 28 at the same time	1H
I./KG 27	I./KG 27		1G
II./KG 27	II./KG 27		1G
III./KG 27	III./KG 27		1G
	I./KG 28	Newly formed in September 1939, became the new III./KG 26 in mid-March 1940 *Erprobungsstaffel* 88 in August 1939,	2F
I./KG 25	I./KG 30	I./KG 25 formed from became I./KG 30 in September	4D
	II./KG 30	Newly formed on 1 December 1939	4D
	III./KG 30	Newly formed on 1 January 1940	4D
	I./KG 40	1./KG 40 formed on 1 November 1939, the remaining Staffeln on 1 April 1940	F8
I./KG 51	I./KG 51		9K
	II./KG 51	Newly formed on 15 April 1940	9K
III./KG 51	IIII./KG 51		9K
I./KG 53	I./KG 53		A1
II./KG 53	II./KG 53		A1
III./KG 53	III./KG 53		A1
I./KG 54	I./KG 54		B3
II./KG 54	II./KG 54	Formed from II./KG 28 on 6 November 1939	B3
	III./KG 54	Newly formed on 1 February 1940 at Wiener Neustadt, but disbanded in July 1940	B3
I./KG 55	I./KG 55		G1
II./KG 55	II./KG 55		G1
	III./KG 55	Newly formed on 2 December 1939	G1
I./KG 76	I./KG 76		F1
	II./KG 76	Newly formed on 1 February 1940	F1
I./KG 77	I./KG 77		3Z
II./KG 77	II./KG 77		3Z
III./KG 77	III./KG 77		3Z
Ln.Reg 100	KGr 100	Ln.Reg.100 became KGr 100 on 18 November 1939	6N
	KGr 126	Newly formed from III./KG 26 in mid-March 1940	1T
Kü.Fl.Gr.606	KGr.606	Formed from the naval reconnaissance unit in November 1939	7T
Kü.Fl.Gr.806	KGr.806		M7

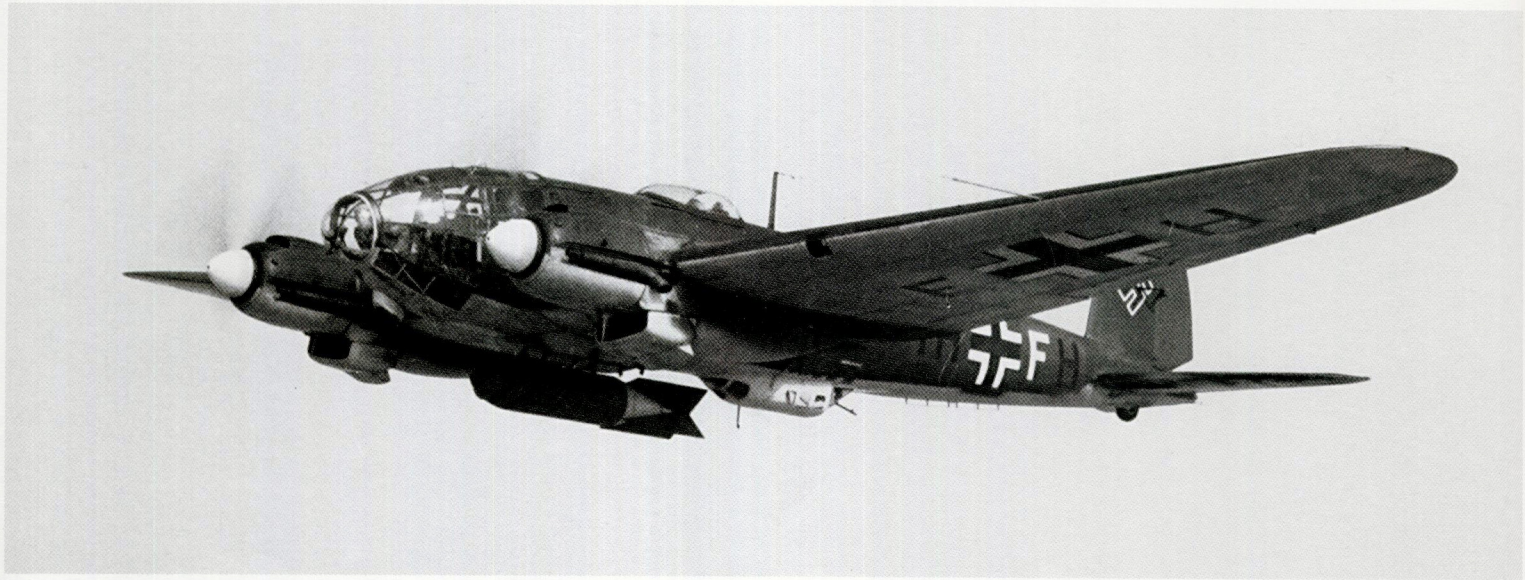


RIGHT: Pilots from 5./KG 28 pose in front of their He 111, 2F+CN, during the campaign against Poland. At this time the unit was based at Seerappen in Ost Preussen (East Prussia). Note the hand-painted emblem just forward of the unit code. The pilots standing are (from left to right) Fw. Specht, Uffz. Prochnow, Oblt. Schulz, Uffz. Erkens, Oblt. Schneider and Uffz. Lampenscherf while sitting are Uffz. Albrecht and Uffz. Vogel.

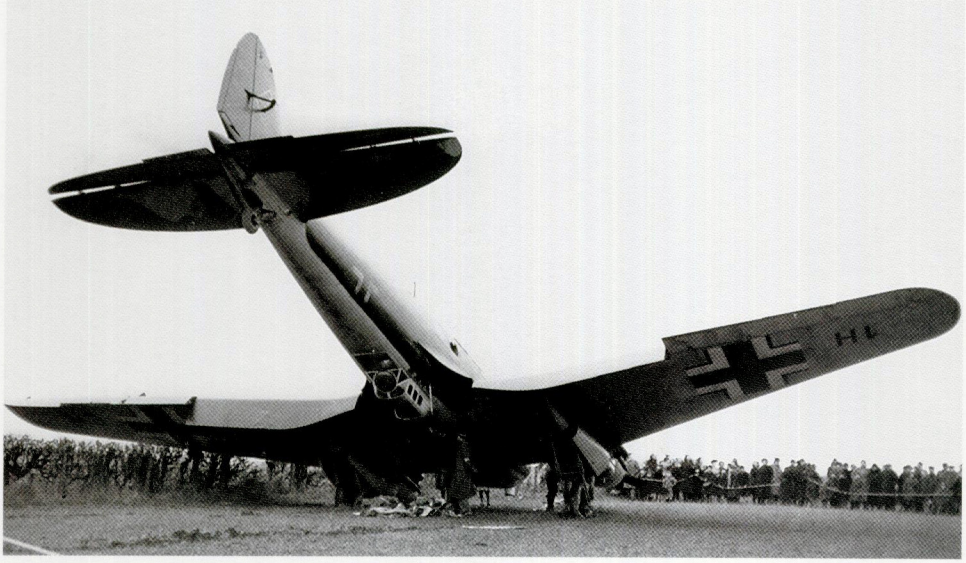
ABOVE: KG 51 was named the 'Edelweiss' Geschwader because of the famous Alpine flower which was painted on the nose of its aircraft. This splendid photograph shows a Ju 88 A-1 with the whole of its unit code, 9K+BP, painted in black below the wings.

RIGHT: Ground crew tow a bomb on its handling trolley while an He 111 H of KG 55 runs up its engines in the background. The aircraft carries the standard black green and dark green camouflage of the period. Note that, as was normal with Luftwaffe aircraft, the centres of the wheels were painted gloss black.

September 1939-March 1940

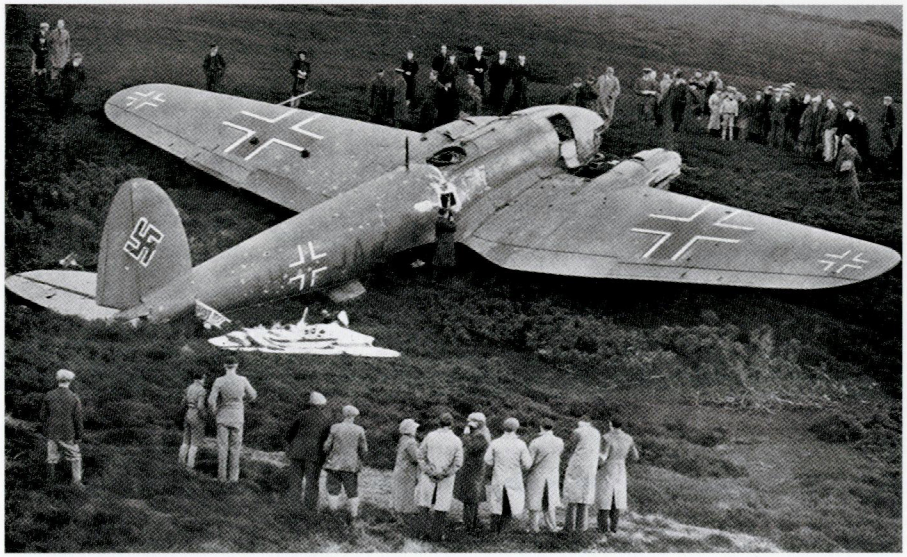


ABOVE: An He 111 of 1./KG 26 in standard European camouflage carrying a large bomb beneath its starboard rack. The aircraft, 1H+FH, has its individual letter painted white.



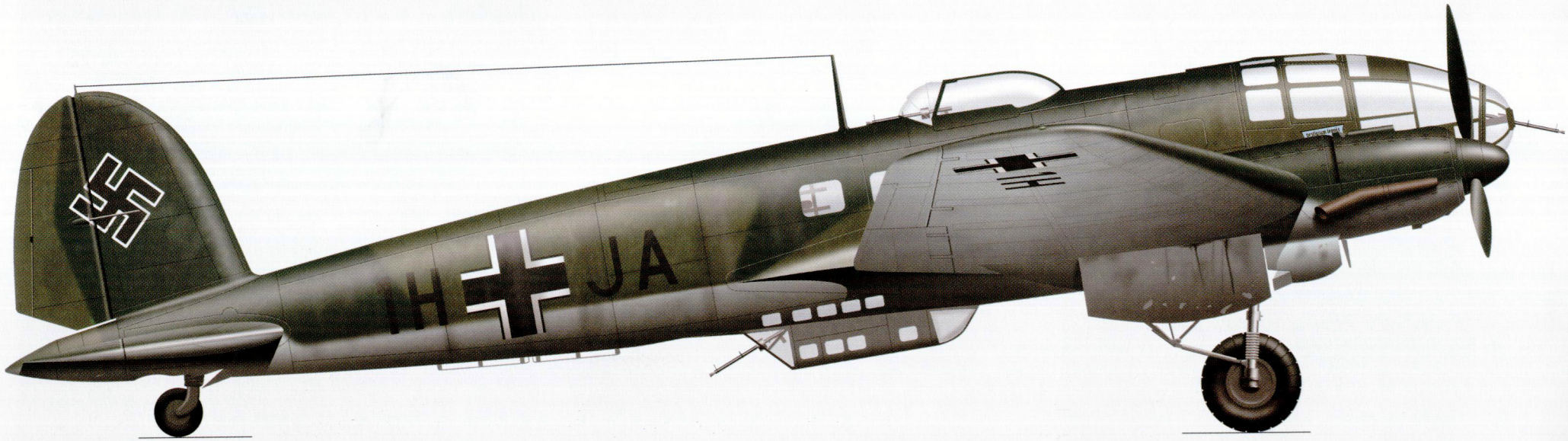
ABOVE: In this close-up of an He 111 H the front gunner is clearly visible lying in the fuselage nose with the pilot behind. The photograph also shows the yellow '87' octane triangle painted above and behind the cockpit canopy.

LEFT: The He 111 H, 1H+EN, W.Nr. 6353 of 5./KG 26 which was shot up by a Spitfire of 602 Squadron and made an emergency landing at North Berwick Law in Scotland on 8 February 1940. The aircraft's code was repeated beneath the wing, '1H' beneath the starboard, and 'EN' below the port. After repair, the Heinkel was delivered to 1426 (Enemy Aircraft) Flight of the RAF where it was used for evaluation and aircraft recognition purposes.



LEFT: This He 111 H, W.Nr. 5449, 1H+JA, from the Geschwader Stab of KG 26 was the first Luftwaffe bomber to be shot down over the British Isles in the Lammermuir Hills near Edinburgh by RAF fighters on 28 October 1939. At this time the complete unit code was painted under the wings and an unusual feature was the painting of two sets of Balkenkreuz above the wings.

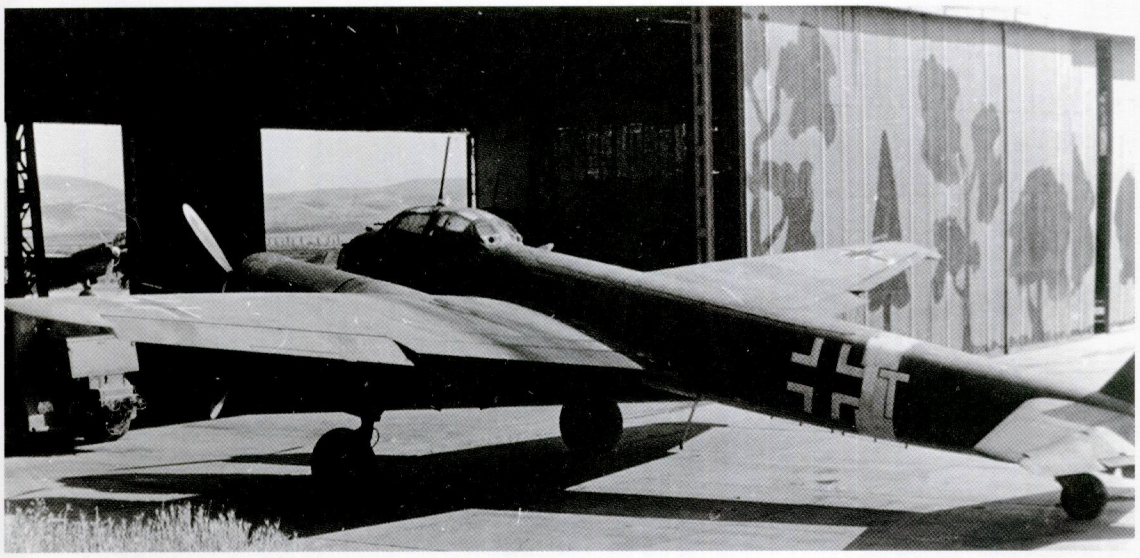
Emblem of Stab/KG 26



Heinkel He 111 H-1 of *Geschwader Stab*/KG 26, October 1939

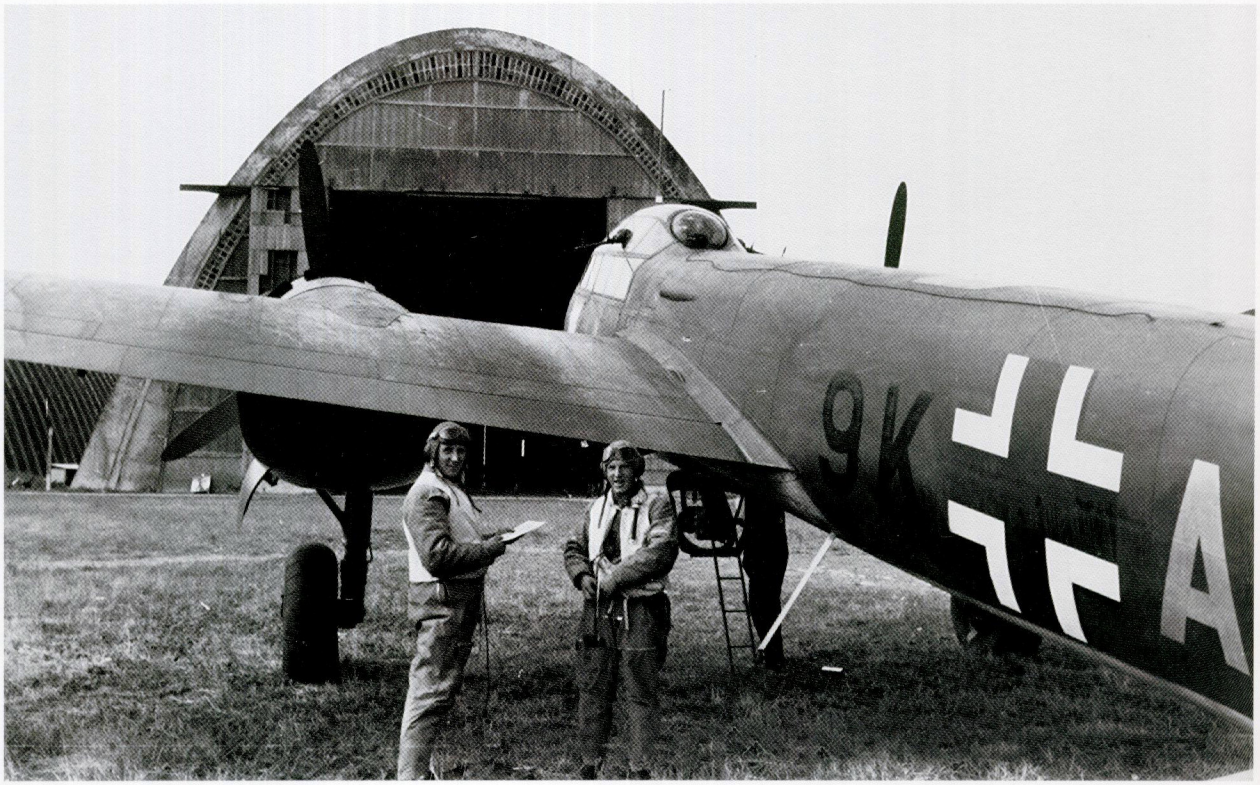
This aircraft from the *Geschwader Stab* of KG 26 was shot down by Spitfires near Edinburgh on 28 October 1939. An unusual feature of the machine was the painting of a large *Balkenkreuze* above the wings in addition to the previously applied smaller national insignia. This may have been done to prevent it from being mistaken for an enemy aircraft.

September 1939-March 1940



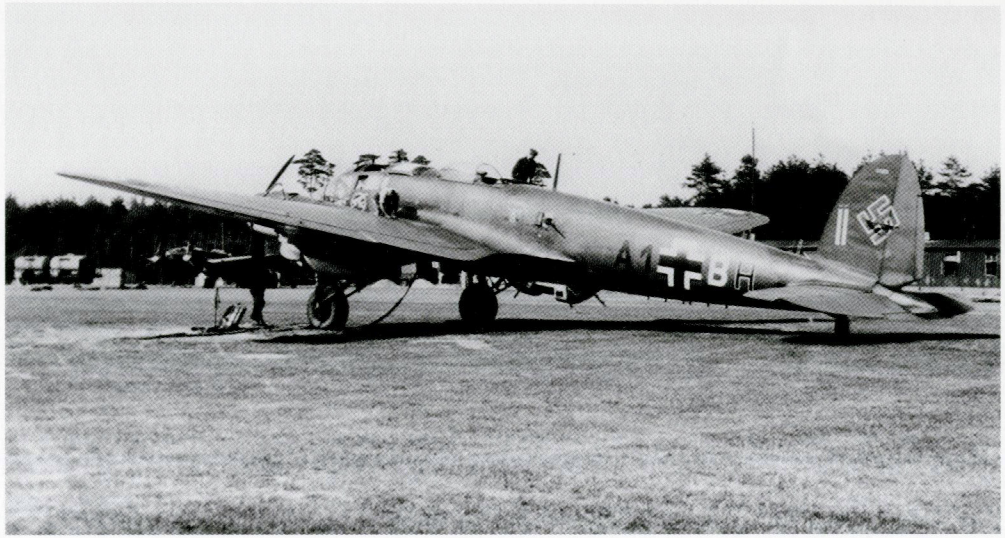
LEFT: Lehrgeschwader 1 began to re-equip with the Ju 88 from early January 1940. This A-5 has its individual letter painted in white, outlined in black.

RIGHT AND BELOW: The third bomber Geschwader to be equipped with the Ju 88 was KG 51 Edelweiss in April 1940. This aircraft, 9K+A?, carries its unit code on both sides of the fuselage and is repeated beneath the wings in black. The aircraft has its spinners and the extreme forward part of the engine cowlings painted yellow. The unusual shaped hangar in the background (*BELOW*) may have been built to house an airship.



Emblem of KG 53

RIGHT: With the exception of a Croatian Staffel, KG 53 was equipped with the He 111 during the six years of its existence. The aircraft illustrated here, A1+BH, W.Nr. 3273 of 1./KG 53, is typical of 1940 period with 70 and 71 uppersurfaces and pale blue beneath. Its individual letter 'B' was painted white and the Staffel letter 'H' was outlined, in the same colour, a common practice with aircraft of the I.Gruppe. Note the Gruppe's emblem, a stylised white diving eagle holding a bomb on a black disc edged in yellow and the two white horizontal bars on the fin which indicated the completion of two special missions.



Heinkel He 111 H-6 of 1./KG 53 '*Legion Condor*', spring 1940
This aircraft carries the standard uppersurface camouflage of this period of black green 70 and dark green 71. The practice of painting the *Werknummer*, in white at the top of the fin, was common, but more unusual were the white mission markings below and the white outline to the Staffel letter 'H'.

April-May 1940

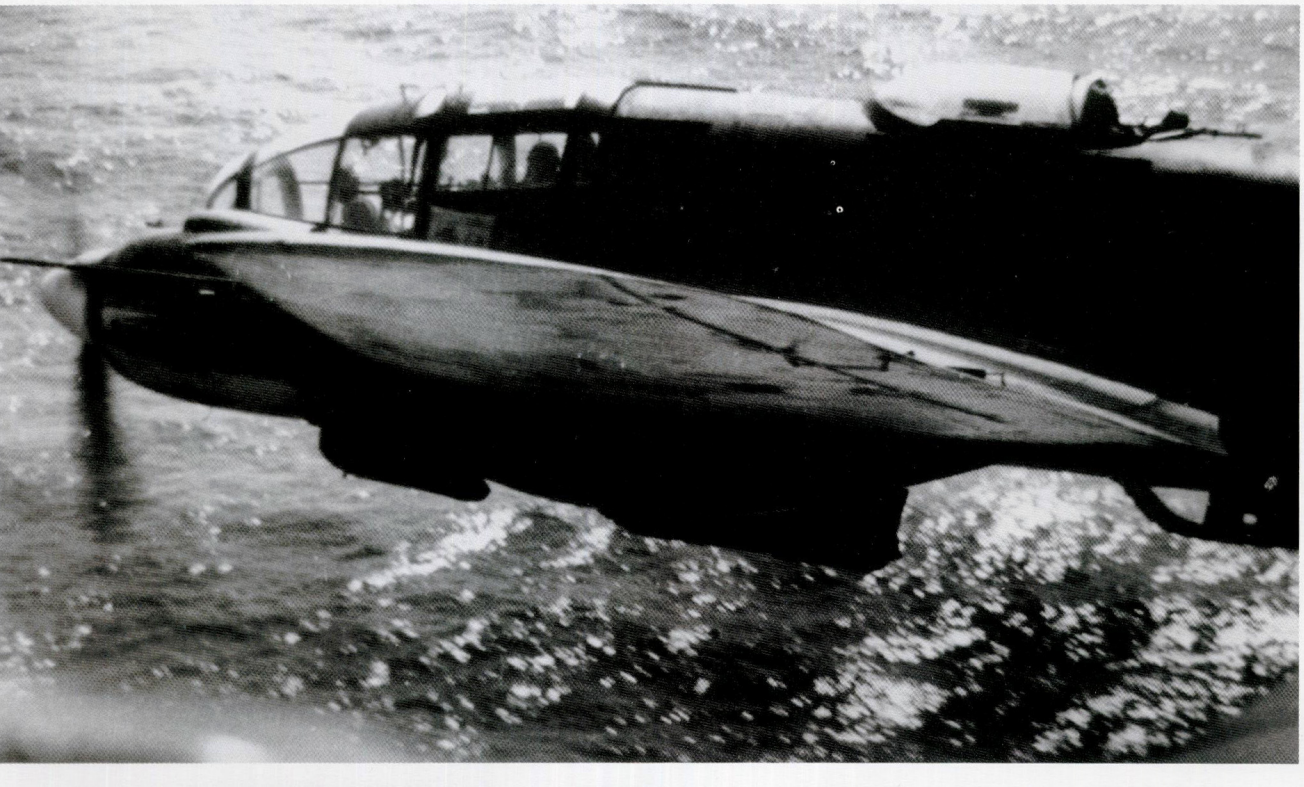
Wesertag – The invasion of Norway and Denmark

April and May 1940

'KG 26 will, with the I. and III.Gruppen, operate against British naval forces in the North Sea. On Wesertag minus one, KG 26 will move to Marx from Delmenhorst, KGr 100 from Luneburg to Nordholz while II./KG 26 will operate directly from Blankensee. The He 111 H-4s will carry as many SC 500 bombs as supplies permit, the remainder to be equipped with SC 250s with Igniter 38 fuses. From dawn on Wesertag all units will mount a two hour alert. One Staffel from KG 26 will fly to Stavanger during the late morning of the 9th, land there, and then maintain full alert to operate against British naval forces. These aircraft must be of the He 111 H-3 type and have a load of SC 250 bombs. The order to transfer to Norway will come as soon as Stavanger is in German hands. An economical cruising speed must be adopted as the fuel situation at Stavanger will be uncertain. On Wesertag, one Staffel from I./KG 26 must be at Hellwerden ready to support the landings at Stavanger. III./KG 26 is ordered to fly a demonstration sortie over Oslo and one of its Staffeln is to land at Fornebu. Leaflets will be dropped over Oslo. A move of the whole of KG 26 to Norway is planned as soon as circumstances allow.'

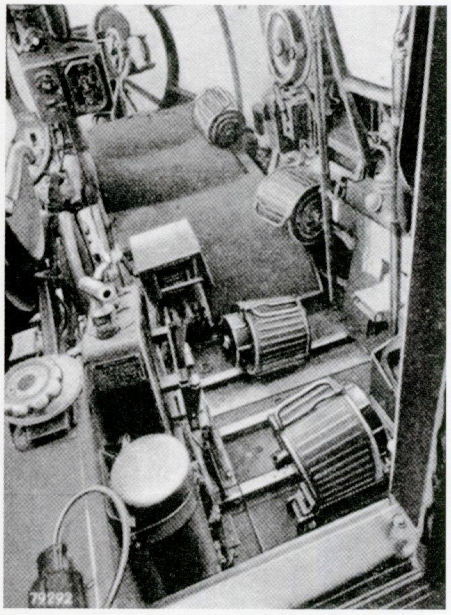
From the plan for *'Weserübung'*, the German invasion of Norway and Denmark
March 1940

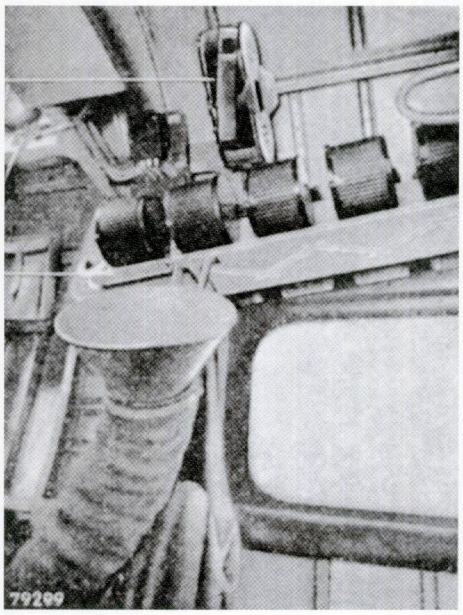
Shortly after the Second World War began, it became obvious to the Nazi leadership that serious consequences for the progress of hostilities could arise if the British attempted to occupy Norway. Such an event would deny the use of Norwegian waters to German ships, so hampering their own supplies of raw materials and preventing the possible use of that country's bases by German surface and underwater raiders. In addition, a British presence in Norway would provide the RAF with airfields from which to bomb northern Germany, and allow the Royal Navy to dominate the Baltic. Finally, the ice-free port of Narvik through which most of Germany's requirements for iron ore from neutral Swedish were sent in winter, would be unavailable. Despite a fear that a large part of the German Navy might be lost in such an operation, Hitler still felt that the invasion of Norway would be worth the risk. An integral part of the operation would also be the assimilation of the tiny country of Denmark which lay between Germany and Norway.

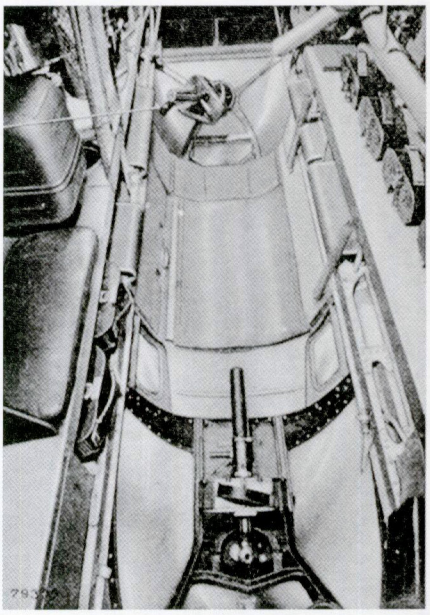


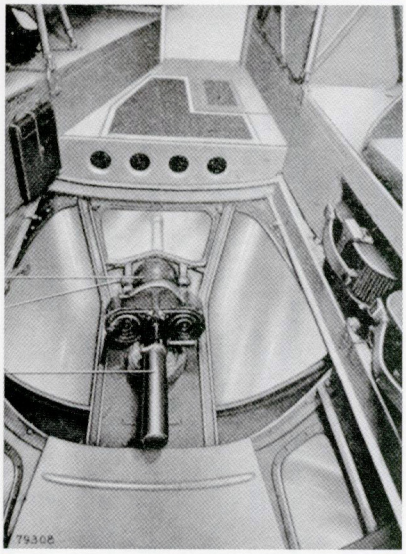
LEFT: An He 111 of the Löwen Geschwader, KG 26, skims low over the water while the pilot looks back over his shoulder at the camera. The top of the emblem of the I.Gruppe, a black seated lion on a white shield with the motto 'Vestigium Leonis' (footprints of the lion), is plainly visible below the cockpit.

April-May 1940

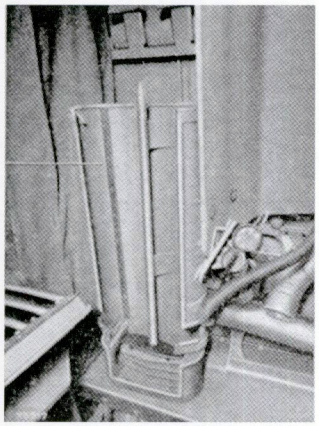


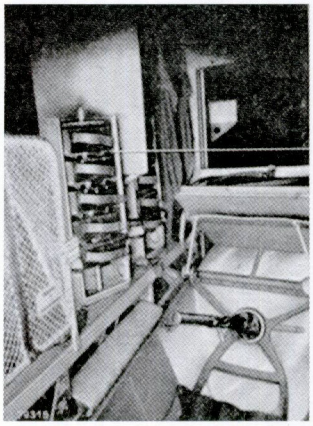


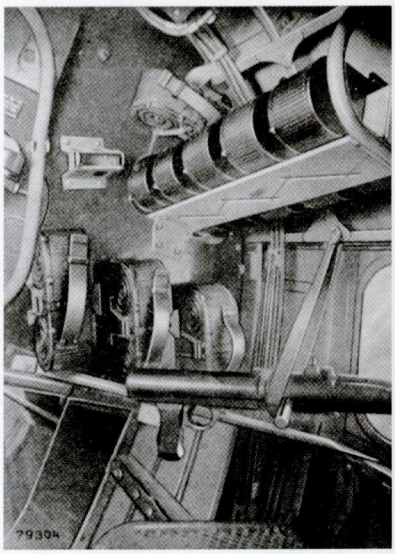




This series of photographs, taken from an official manual, illustrate the interior of the most important German bomber to operate in the Norwegian campaign, the He 111.







TOP LEFT: A view of the right-hand side of the cockpit looking forward shows the spare ammunition drums for the 7.9 mm MG 15 machine-guns. (*TOP CENTRE*) Spare ammunition drums stowed in the cockpit of the He 111 behind the pilot. (*TOP RIGHT*) View of the interior of the ventral gondola, this time looking forward and showing both forward and rearward-firing guns. To operate these, the gunner would lie prone on the floor of the gondola. (*ABOVE LEFT*) The ventral gondola, looking aft, showing the rearward-firing MG 15 machine-gun. (*ABOVE CENTRE*) Two photographs showing (left) the empty rack for further ammunition drums and (right) with it filled. *(ABOVE RIGHT)* One of the side-mounted MG 15 machine guns mounted on the starboard side of the He 111 with its spare ammunition drums stowed to the side and above.

LEFT: KG 26 flew many operations against Allied shipping during the campaign against Norway. This aircraft carries the familiar black seated lion on a white shield of I./KG 26. Note that at least one of the spinners has been changed as one is painted blue (indicating and aircraft of the Geschwader Stab) an one is in black green with a yellow tip (indicating the third Staffel).

April-May 1940

The directive for the completion of the invasion of Norway and Denmark was signed by Hitler on 1 March 1940 under the code name 'Operation *Weserübung*' (Weser Exercise). *General* Nikolaus von Falkenhorst was appointed to command the operation and the forces placed at his disposal included two Army Corps, two Mountain Divisions, seven Infantry Divisions, a *Luftwaffe* Corps (X. *Fliegerkorps*) and a large number of warships. Because of the risk, Göring was extremely unhappy about committing his air forces to the campaign and refused to subordinate his squadrons to the army under von Falkenhorst. Mindful of Göring's reservations it was decided that his second in command, *General* Erhard Milch, would take overall control of *Luftwaffe* operations against Norway and Denmark, operational leadership being subordinated to the X. *Fliegerkorps* under *Generalleutnant* Hans Geissler.

'*Weserübung*' was originally scheduled for 20 March, but had to be put back until 9 April because of various problems. The main plan was for five large naval groups to make simultaneous attacks on the Norwegian ports of Oslo, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik. Each group would then land its complement of troops, each of which would have airborne support.

On the day prior to the launch of '*Weserübung*', 8 April 1940, the *Luftwaffe* bomber forces available to Geissler moved to their operational bases in northern Germany and comprised the following:

Stab/KG 4	He 111 P-4	Lüneburg
I.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P-4	Fassburg
II.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P-4	Lüneburg
III.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P-4	Perleberg
Stab/KG 26	He 111 H-3 & H-4	Marx
I.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H-3 & H-4	Marx
II.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H-3 & H-4	Lübeck-Blankensee
III.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H-3 & H-4	Marx
Stab/KG 30	Ju 88 A-1	Westerland/Sylt
I.*Gruppe*/KG 30	Ju 88 A-1	Westerland/Sylt
II.*Gruppe*/KG 30	Ju 88 A-1	Westerland/Sylt
III.*Gruppe*/KG 30	Ju 88 A-1	Westerland/Sylt
KGr 100	He 111 H-3	Nordholz

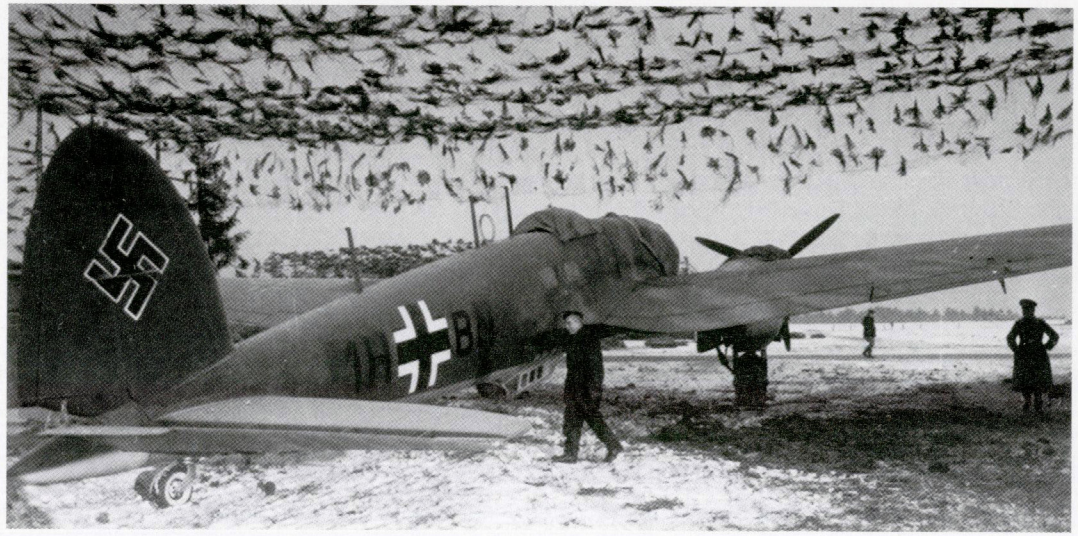
Apart from the above, X. *Fliegerkorps* included the Ju 87s of I./St.G 1, the Bf 110s of I./ZG 1 and I./ZG 76, the Bf 109 Es of II./JG 77, plus a number of reconnaissance and transport aircraft. Also assigned to the operation were a few aircraft from the old coastal reconnaissance units Kü.Fl.Gr. 606 and 806 which had been converted to the Do 17 Z and He 111 J respectively to undertake conventional bomber operations under the designations KGr 606 and 806.

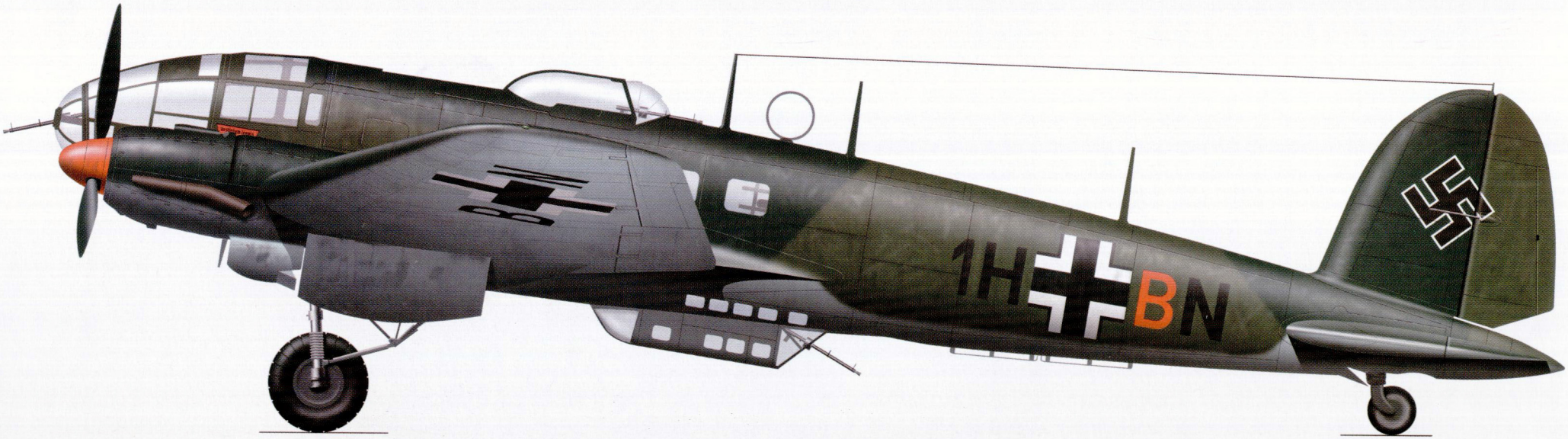
BELOW: A view of the inside of the nose of an He 111 showing the combined observer and nose gun position.

BELOW: Generalfeldmarschall Erhard Milch (left) was appointed as the first commander of Luftflotte 5 on 12 April 1940. Milch had served in the German army during the First World War, transferring to the flying service in 1915. In 1926 he became Director of the newly-formed German airline, Lufthansa, and was appointed State Secretary for Aviation in 1933. He later took over from Ernst Udet as Director General of Equipment. He died in January 1972.

II./KG 26 Badge

RIGHT: Parked under camouflage netting, this He 111 of 5./KG 26, 1H+BN, carries the typical camouflage and markings of the Norwegian campaign. The individual letter 'B' is in red and the positioning of the Hakenkreuz across both fin and rudder was not uncommon during this period.

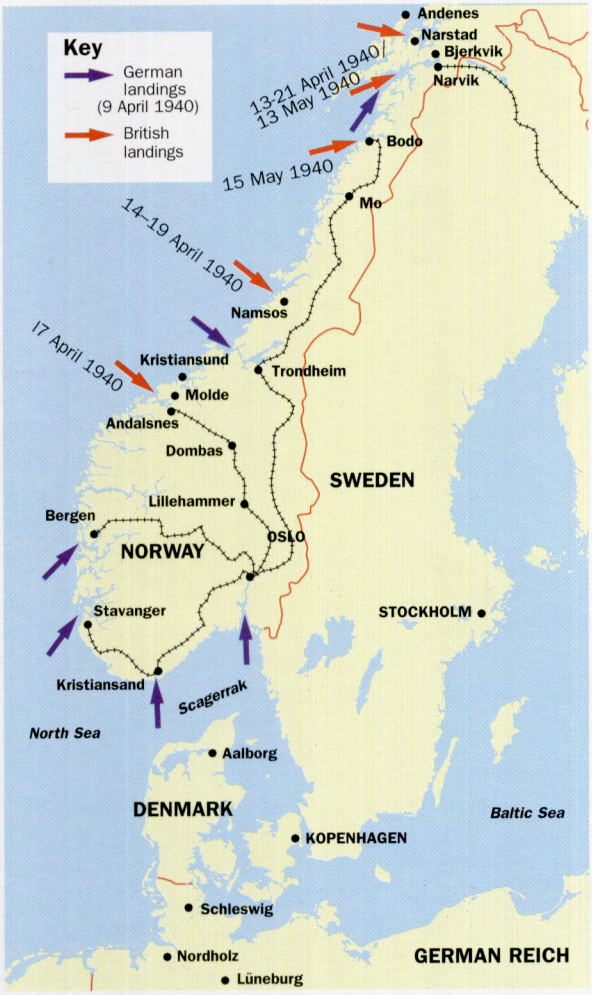




Heinkel He 111 H-1 of 5./KG 26, April 1940

KG 26 was one of the *Luftwaffe's* most important anti-shipping units, its Heinkels proving a thorn in the side of both the Royal Navy and the British merchant fleet. This aircraft carries three radio masts above the fuselage indicating that it was equipped with the *Y-Verfahren* navigation system. Its camouflage and markings are typical of the early war period.

April-May 1940



ABOVE: Operational Targets flown by KGr 100 'Wiking' in Norway, between 9 April and 10 June 1940

On 8 April the Fw 200s from the *Fernflugstaffel* (1./KG 40) and He115s from Kü.Fl.Gr.506 carried out extensive reconnaissance of the North Sea up to 63 degrees north and roughly parallel with the important Norwegian port of Trondheim. In addition, 24 He 111s from KG 26 made an attack on the Royal Navy base at Scapa Flow to forestall any British interference. This attack failed to damage any British ship and two Heinkels were shot down by Hurricanes of 43 Squadron which had meanwhile moved from Acklington in England to Wick in northern Scotland. One ditched into the sea while the other crash-landed at Wick airfield. Just before this, on 6 April, the *Kommodore* of KG 26, *Oberst* Robert Fuchs, had become the first *Luftwaffe* bomber pilot to be awarded the coveted *Ritterkreuz*.

The invasion of Norway actually began at 05.00 hours on 9 April 1940 with the planned landings by the five naval task forces. One of the first bomber units to become involved was 9./KG 4 which attacked the 210 mm guns of the Kvarven coastal battery outside Bergen which had just crippled the German cruiser *Königsberg*. Shortly afterwards He 111s from 8. and 9./KG 4 landed at Stavanger-Sola after having bombed its airfield installations. Five He 111s from KG 26 attacked the forts of Odderöe and Gleodden near Kristiansand at 06.45, a further attack by I./KG 26 and parts of KG 4 following at 09.30. Meanwhile another *Gruppe* from KG 4 dropped leaflets on Copenhagen, the Danish capital, in a pointless attempt to reassure their citizens of Germany's good intentions. Nevertheless, German power was such that Denmark fell within hours, beginning a period of misery for its people which was to last five years.

Although opposition in some parts of Norway was to prove quite light, other parts put up a stout defence. For example, the Fort Oskarsborg coastal batteries in the Dröbak Narrows, leading to the capital city of Oslo, commenced heavy fire on Admiral Oskar Kummetz's naval force, sinking the heavy cruiser *Blücher* and heavily damaging the pocket-battleship *Lützow*. The Heinkels of III./KG 4, KG 26 and KGr 100, in company with the Ju 87s of I./St.G 1, then bombed the batteries and the airfield of Oslo-Kjeller in several waves. Shortly afterwards Oslo-Fornebu airfield was taken by troops landed in Ju 52/3ms. Around 10.30, the large British Fleet which had been assembled under Admiral Charles Forbes to combat the suspected German landing, was spotted by an He 111 from KG 26 off Bergen. From 12.20 the ships were attacked by 47 Ju 88s from KG 30 followed by 41 He 111s from KG 26 just over two hours later. During these, an SC 500 bomb hit the deck of the battle-cruiser, HMS *Rodney* but the vessel's armoured deck saved her from serious damage. The cruisers *Glasgow*, *Devonshire* and *Southampton* were, however, damaged by SC 250 bombs and the destroyer *Ghurka* sunk west of Stavanger. KG 30 reported the loss of four Ju 88s to anti-aircraft fire.

Next day 45 He 111s from KGr 100 attacked British shipping east of the Shetlands. In the following air action the He 111 piloted by the leader of the 1.Staffel, *Hptm*. Hermann Schmidt, was hit by 40 bullets from a Hurricane which killed his mechanic and wounded his gunner. In return the German unit claimed the destruction of a Hurricane. Later, a second shipping attack was carried out by 19 Ju 88s from KG 30 and 19 He 111s from KG 26, hits being claimed on a British destroyer. A total of two Ju 88s and two He 111s were lost, one of the latter, with *Obstlt*. Ahlifeld of KG 26 on board, being shot down by Peter Townsend of 43 Squadron near Scapa Flow.

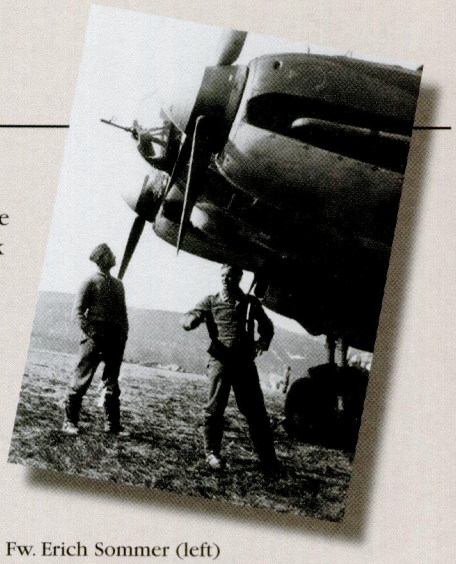
Few operations were carried out by the bombers on 11 April, but next day He 111s from KG 26 attacked Royal Navy ships north-west of Trondheim. Claims were made of hits on an aircraft carrier with one SC 250 and two SC 50s bombs despite intense flak. Two He 111s were lost. Also on the 12th, all German air forces in Norway were placed under the control of a new Air Fleet, designated *Luftflotte* 5, which had been formed under *General* Erhard Milch. On the following day 22 He 111s from KG 26 bombed the Norwegian air base at Bardufoss airfield in the far north of the country, but from then on operations concentrated on the activity around the port of Narvik.

"Must have cost Mr. Churchill a lot of money..."

ERICH SOMMER (NAVIGATOR WITH KAMPFGRUPPE 100)

On 15 April came the order to transfer to Christiansand in Norway, but on arrival we were told to get the hell out of there as the airfield was already heavily overcrowded. So back we went to Schleswig. We were scarcely back on the ground when we were ordered to transfer immediately to Oslo-Fornebu. We arrived there finally just as night approached, feeling thoroughly exhausted.

Conditions were far from ideal, however. There were no barracks and no room to bed down, only the wrecks of transport aircraft that had crashed during the first day's action to make things look uncomfortable. It was a cold sleepless night on the concrete floor of a corridor of an airport building and by dawn we were up again, jumping around to get warm. There was no warm food for the second day running, but at least some hot coffee arrived. The morning dragged on until the briefing at the tower took place. We were to reconnoitre along the coast of Norway and the Fjord into Narvik, as there was no clear picture of what the situation was in relation to the Narvik forces and the ship movements of the enemy.



Fw. Erich Sommer (left) and Uffz. Drüg of KGr 100 in front of their He 111 just prior to the start of the Norwegian campaign.

There were no weather reports and no navigational aids anywhere along the coast, and more infuriating was that there were no maps, of any scale, above Bergen, just to the north of us in Oslo. We had pointed this out days ago. We had packs of maps in our metal navigator's cases for almost everywhere in Europe, but nothing north of Bergen! That showed how badly the whole operation had been organized. It gave the impression that it had been prepared without any forethought, but just on the spur of the moment with maybe a fortnight's preparation. The only map we could find for the area north of Bergen, to the very top of Norway, was a weather chart stuck on the wall of the control tower. Each navigator took some sheets of transparent paper and traced the coastline of Norway. That was it: good luck, see you after a while, still frozen, at a lake east of Trondheim. Fly in loose formation and report anything urgent (but sparingly) by radio!

So we took off in formation at 11.42 hours, the tanks of our Heinkels full to the brim and some bombs in case we found a good target. Spread out widely, and just holding visible contact, we cruised northwards out to sea, skirting the numerous islands. It was warm and cosy in the sunlit cabin except for an air leak by my right leg.

We had lost contact with the others when, at 2,500 m (8000 ft), we crossed the Arctic circle and approached a longish island just out from the rocky cost with its many fjords and glaciers. As we came nearer we saw ships entering the channel between the island and the coast from the north. As we swung round for a second look, the whole line of ships comprising some destroyers, possibly a battleship, a cruiser and more destroyers, opened up with orange flashes all over their decks. After a split second lots of white puffs appeared around and in front of us so that we had no choice but to make a left turn and dive for the deck, hoping to hide behind the island. We innocents had waited too long for evasive action and seemed to have little chance. Even the big guns of the battleship opened fire, sending up waterspouts so accurately in front of us that we nearly hit them when near the water. We immediately reported the battleship as the *Warspite* and the movement of the naval force, but got no acknowledgment. Must have cost Mr. Churchill a lot of money with all this ammunition wasted we thought. I found out later that it would have been well worth the ammunition that they wasted if they had managed to down us and prevent the radio message from getting through (which it didn't anyway). Fortunately, we didn't get one splinter and that was very important as it allowed us to continue northwards. What I didn't know until forty years later was that the sight of us had forced the British battle group to immediately turn north.

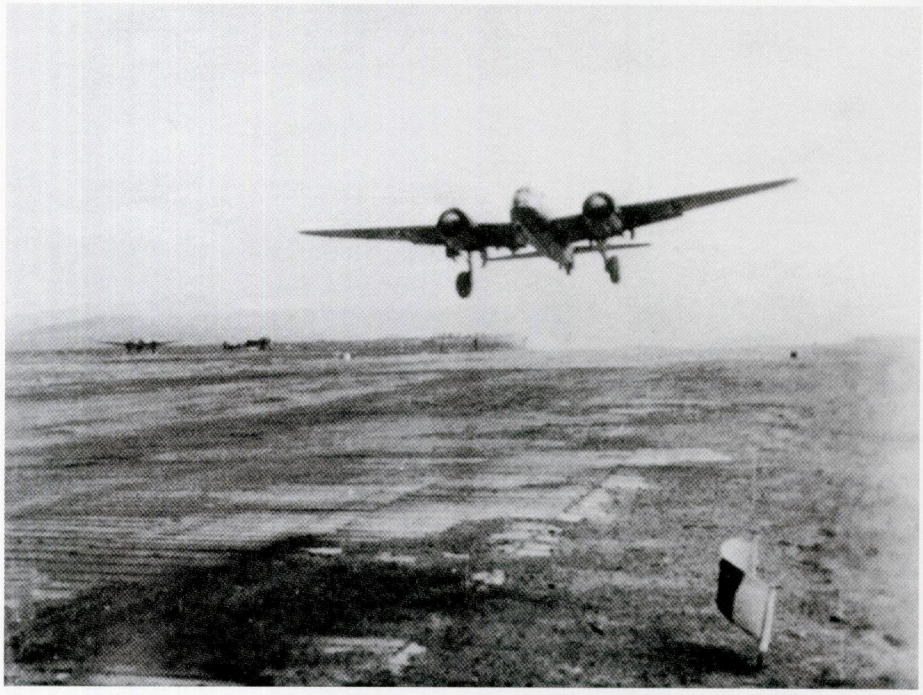
At the entrance to the Vestfjord we found nine ships lying idle, among them three destroyers and three big merchantmen. At Harstadt we saw a cruiser and a destroyer, clearly enemy ships, but no sign of troop disembarkation anywhere. Inside the harbour of Narvik nothing but destruction. All ships, including a number of German destroyers were sunk or scuttled on the rocky beaches. Only one single merchantman in the harbour looked anything like on an even keel and seemed to be under way. We then attacked the ships at Harstadt with our 50 kg bombs but without visible result.

On the way back we thought about the precarious situation of the few sailors and soldiers of *General* Dietl's Mountain Division, who had survived and landed before the destruction began. A decisive push by the British, French, Polish and Norwegians would have overcome them immediately without doubt, but the was no sign of such a move. The hills were covered in snow and the landscape made a bleak and desolate impression. An attempt to supply these troops with light artillery had already taken place when 15 Ju 52s laden with the weapons had been dispatched on 13 April for a one-way mission to discharge their cargo on the frozen Lake Hartvik, north of Narvik. Two of them had returned because of mechanical trouble, three were shot down by destroyers while coming in to land, but the remaining ten landed. Because of lack of fuel for the return, they were left to sink through the ice when the thaw set in. As late as 1985, four of them were recovered from a depth of 50 metres and proved in remarkably good condition.

We ourselves returned and landed at Jonsvannet, east of Trondheim, the last of the *Gruppe* to do so. We immediately began rolling 200 litre drums of aviation fuel over the ice so that we could pump their contents into our almost empty tanks. It was hard work. Afterwards we were driven to Trondheim to eat a fantastic smorgasbord at a hotel and have a night's rest, interrupted at about midnight by sirens as the Tommies tried to bomb our aircraft on the lake, but without success.

April-May 1940

ABOVE: A pilot of the Geschwader Stab of KG 30 waves to the camera from the cockpit of his Ju 88. This part of KG 30 carried the familiar black diving eagle badge on its aircraft but superimposed on a shield diagonally divided in red, white and yellow.



ABOVE: A Ju 88 of KG 30 comes in to land on a barren, windswept airfield in Norway. The Geschwader was the only one to operate the Junkers bomber during the Norwegian campaign.

Previously, on 10 April, the Royal Navy's Second Destroyer Flotilla under Capt. Warburton-Lee had sailed up the Vestfjord at Narvik and attacked the German destroyers which had landed *General* Eduard Dietl's forces at the port the day before. In the ensuing action two destroyers were lost by both sides, but three other German destroyers were damaged and the merchantman, *Rauenfels*, which was bringing supplies to Dietl, was also sunk. Three days later the British Destroyer Flotilla, this time reinforced by the battleship HMS *Warspite*, went back into the fjord and sank the remaining German destroyers. Twenty-two Heinkels from KG 26 attempted to bomb the Royal Navy force, but bad weather prevented them from finding their targets.

On 14 April hurriedly assembled British Expeditionary forces landed at Harstadt, 55 km (35 miles) north-west of Narvik and at Namsos, 130 km (80 miles) north-east of Trondheim. British air attacks on Stavanger-Sola and Bergen airfields prevented the landings from being spotted immediately, but then bombers from *Luftflotte* 5, reinforced by the Ju 88s from III./LG 1, flew constant harassing attacks against the British. One of the *Luftwaffe's* most fortuitous achievements came on the 15th when the wing of a KG 30 Ju 88 caught the aerial at the town's radio station putting it out of action. On the 17 April the cruiser HMS *Suffolk* was claimed damaged by a SC 1000 bomb, and next day seven He 111s from KG 26, eight Ju 88s from KG 30 and three Fw 200s from 1./KG 40 attacked British shipping in the Harstadt-Namsos area. Hits were claimed on a battleship and a transport.

Another British landing was carried out on 19 April, at Åndalsnes, 160 km (100 miles) south-west of Trondheim with the aim of isolating the German garrison holding that town. This led Hitler to order the towns of Namsos and Åndalsnes to be destroyed 'without regard to the civilian population', which resulted in an intensive bombing campaign beginning the next day. In the third raid, carried out by 24 Heinkels from II. and III./KG 4, most of the town of Namsos together with its wharves, railway station and rolling stock was destroyed. This German action led the Allied commander in the area, Major-General Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart, to inform London that there was no point in sending further supplies to the port without adequate fighter protection. Wiart would have been even less happy if he had known that the two other *Luftwaffe* bomber units, I. and II./KG 54 with He 111 Ps, had meanwhile been ordered to join the campaign.

In a desperate attempt to provide British and French troops in the area with some form of aerial protection, 18 Gladiators from 263 Squadron were flown off the aircraft carrier HMS *Glorious*, arriving in Norway on 24 April. Because of the lack of conventional airfields they were forced to use the frozen Lake Lesjaskog near Namsos as a base. Operating under the most primitive conditions, the fighters managed to claim 15 victories during the next two days, but were bombed constantly by the He 111s of LG 1 which led to the destruction of 13 Gladiators on the ground. In turn, two Heinkels were shot down and another badly damaged. The five remaining Gladiators then moved to a landing ground at Setnesmoen, but two more were soon written off. Finally lack of fuel forced the personnel from the RAF Squadron to return to Britain for re-equipment.

April-May 1940

After the Gladiators of 263 Squadron left HMS *Glorious* the carrier's own fighters, in company with those from HMS *Ark Royal*, began to fly missions in support of the Allied troops. Their first successful action came on 24 April when they intercepted two He 111s of KG 4, and shot down the aircraft piloted by the *Kommandeur* of the III.*Gruppe*, *Major* Ernst Kusserow, which belly landed near German lines. Kusserow was taken prisoner. Generally, however, the carrier borne fighters were relatively ineffective, and failed to prevent *Luftwaffe* forces from harrying Allied troops as they were made to retreat back towards Namsos. By 26 April, the following bombers were available to *Luftflotte* 5:

Stab/KG 4	He 111 P	Fassberg
I.Gruppe/KG 4	He 111 P (part)	Oslo-Fornebu
II.Gruppe/KG 4	He 111 P (part)	Fassberg
II.Gruppe/KG 4	He 111 P (part)	Lüneburg
Stab/KG 26	He 111 H	Aalborg-West
I.Gruppe/KG 26	He 111 H	Stavanger-Sola
II.Gruppe/KG 26	He 111 H	Aalborg-West
III.Gruppe/KG 26	He 111 H	Aalborg-West
Stab/KG 30	Ju 88 A	Westerland/Sylt
I.Gruppe/KG 30	Ju 88 A	Westerland/Sylt
II.Gruppe/KG 30	Ju 88 A	Westerland/Sylt
III.Gruppe/KG 30	Ju 88 A	Westerland/Sylt
1.Staffel/KG 40	Fw 200 C	Copenhagen-Kastrup
I.Gruppe/KG 54	He 111 P	Perleberg
II.Gruppe/KG 54	He 111 P	Celle
KGr 100	He 111 H	Lüneburg

ABOVE: Most of the operations flown by the Kampfflieger during the latter part of the Norwegian campaign were in support of General Dietl's defence of the port of Narvik. This photograph shows some of the sunken ships in the port.

By the end of the month, these forces were able to operate virtually unopposed, KG 4, KG 30 and KGr 100 (sometimes supported by LG 1) hammering the port of Åndalsnes while Namsos was left to the the Ju 87s of I./St.G 1. The last stages of the Allied evacuation were covered by fighters from the two British aircraft carriers, despite a sustained effort by the *Luftwaffe* to sink them.

Meanwhile, General Dietl's force was still isolated in Narvik. In an attempt to combat Allied naval power in the area, the bombers of *Luftflotte* 5 flew over 100 sorties between 14 April and the end of the month. Despite these, only two successes were achieved. The first came on 18 April when a Fw 200 from 1./KG 40 damaged the aircraft carrier HMS *Furious*, the second when a Ju 88 A-1 from 2./KG 30 damaged the French destroyer *Émile Bertin* a day later.

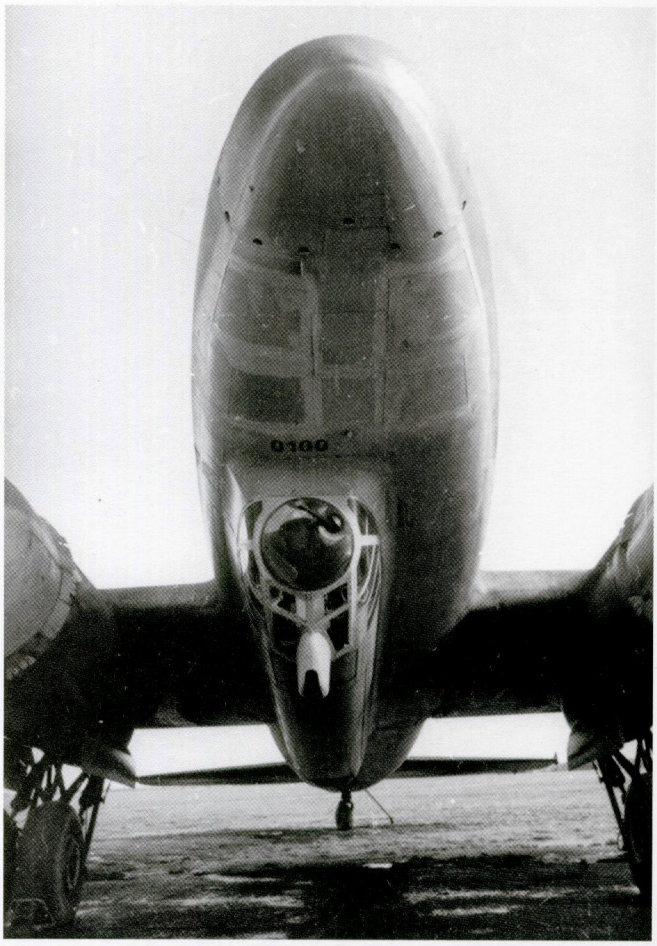
During the first ten days of May 1940, 205 sorties were flown by KG 26, LG 1 and KGr 100, the latter sinking the Polish destroyer *Grom* and damaging the cruiser HMS *Aurora*. Soon afterwards, French troops landed at Bjerkvik, some 15 km (10 miles) from Narvik, and slowly drove Dietl's army units back inland towards the Swedish border. German bombers were again very active. On the night of 14/15 May I./KG 26 sank the Polish troopship *Chrobry* which was carrying a British Guards Battalion and the only British tanks in the area. On 18 May the battleship HMS *Resolution* was so badly damaged that she had to return to port, and eight days later the anti-aircraft cruiser HMS *Curlew* was sunk by the Heinkels of KGr 100.

Some hope of relief to the Allies was given on 21 May when 263 Squadron returned to Norway with its new Gladiators, to be joined shortly afterwards by 46 Squadron's Hurricanes. The former eventually went to Bodø, south of Narvik, the latter to Bardufoss, to the north, but without radar cover their task proved difficult. They did however manage to destroy ten *Luftwaffe* aircraft between 28 and 29 May including a Fw 200 C-1 of 1./KG 40 and an He 111 H-3 of KGr 100. The latter was piloted by the *Kommandeur* of KGr 100, *Hptm.* Artur von Casimir, who was taken prisoner. He was replaced by Hptm. Kurt Aschenbrenner.

Narvik finally fell to the Allies on 28 May, with Dietl's forces retreating further eastwards towards the Swedish frontier, but it was a hollow victory. Due to the German successes in France, the Allies realised that continuing the offensive in Norway was doomed to failure. Therefore, on 3 June, they began to withdraw their forces. Within a few days 24,500 troops together with their artillery and most of their stores managed to make their way back to their ships despite being constantly harried by the bombers of KG 26 and KG 30. The last sortie of the campaign was flown by II./KG 26 which sank two merchantmen off the Faeroe Islands and, on 10 June, the last remaining Norwegian forces surrendered.

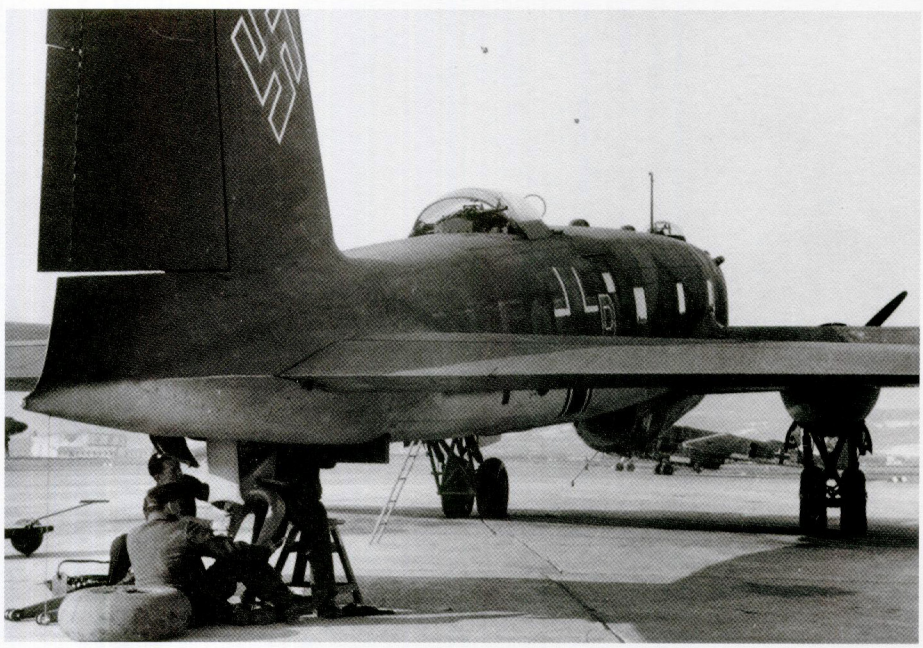
April-May 1940

ABOVE: The 'world-in-a-ring' insignia became famous as the emblem on KG 40's Fw 200s. The world was coloured black and pale blue with the ring in bright yellow.

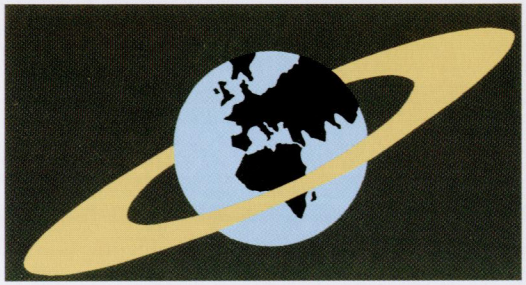


ABOVE: This view of the underside of the fuselage and the ventral gondola of a Focke-Wulf Condor gives an excellent impression of how the ground crews had to repaint the panel joints of the aircraft in brand new pale blue paint due to wear caused by exposure to the elements. The W.Nr. 0100 is painted in black forward of the gondola.

BELOW: This photograph of a rather weather-beaten Fw 200 C-1 illustrates the relatively soft dividing line between the upper and lower surface camouflage colours applied to the aircraft.

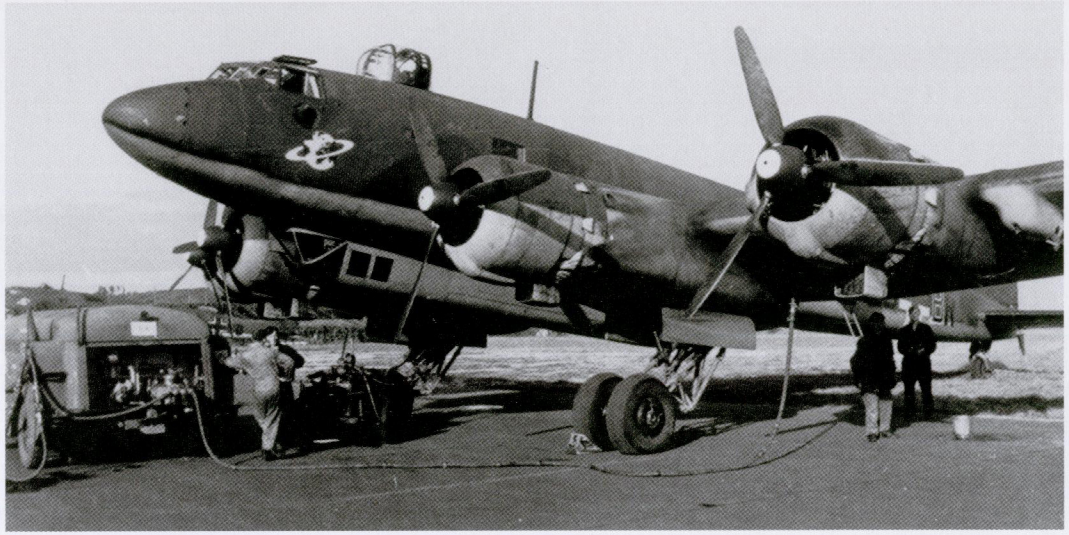


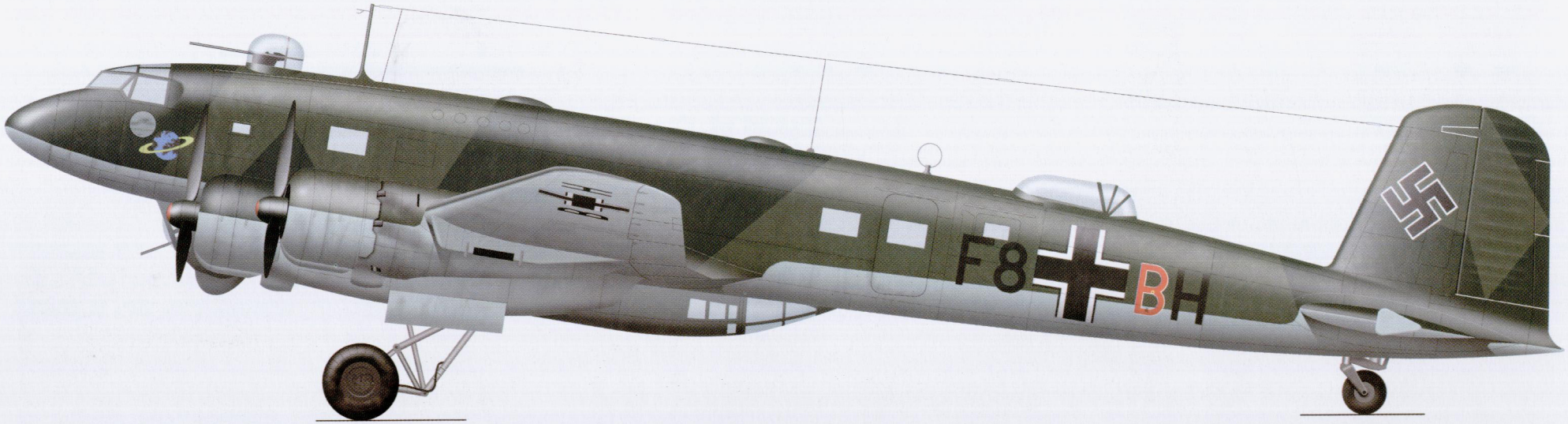
ABOVE: Major Edgar Petersen acquired the first Fw 200 C-1 Condors for his specialist long-range anti-shipping unit, initially known as the 'Fernflugstaffel' and later as 1./KG 40, during September 1939. The Gruppe Stab and 2.Staffel were formed on 1 May 1940, a 3.Staffel being added in May. Many aircraft of this type had early type fuselage Balkenkreuz with narrow white outlines. The aircraft's individual letter 'B' is painted in red outlined in white.



Variation of KG 40 emblem

RIGHT: A Fw 200 C-1, F8+BR, of 7./KG 40 being refuelled for another mission. The letter 'B' of the code is outlined in yellow, the Staffel colour, as are the spinner tips. Note also that the Geschwader emblem often show slight variations of the land masses painted on the map of the world.

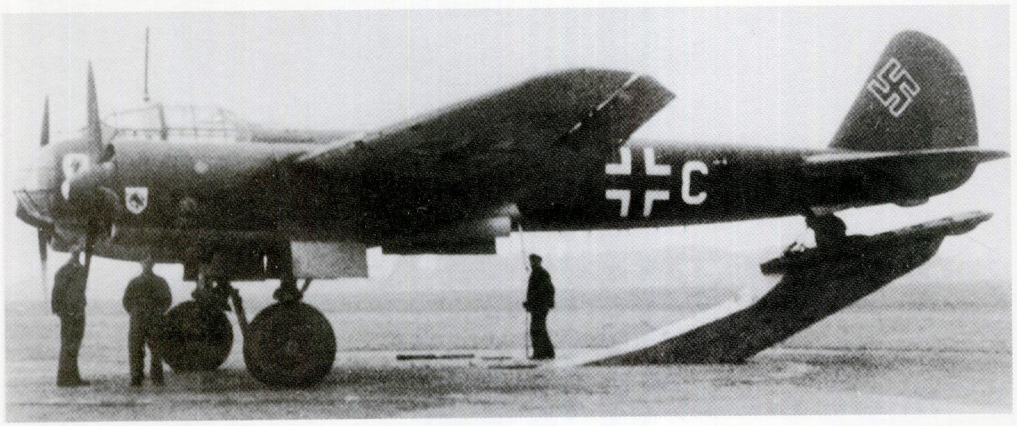




Focke-Wulf Fw 200 C-1 of 2./KG 40, April 1940

The famous 'world-in-a-ring' insignia was adopted by KG 40 shortly after its formation on 1 November 1939. Virtually all Focke-Wulf Condors adopted black green and dark green uppersurface camouflage with pale blue beneath.

April-May 1940

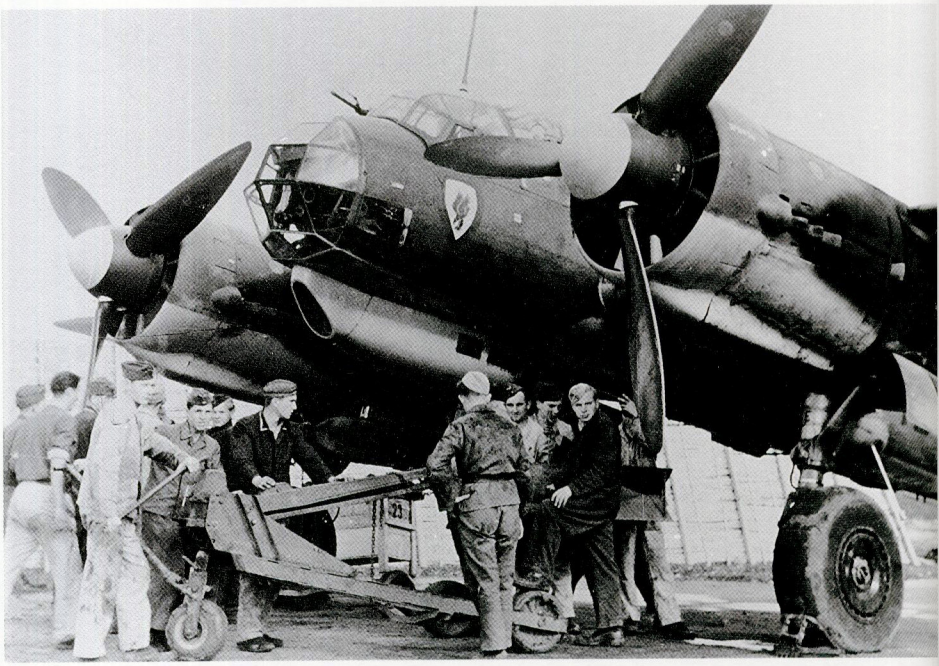


Emblem of 1./KG 30

ABOVE AND BELOW: In addition to the famous diving eagle emblem of KG 30, Ju 88s from the 1.Staffel had an emblem comprising an orange target sighting a black umbrella on a white shield painted on the outer surface of both engine cowlings. The umbrella served as a reference to the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain who was famous for carrying such an accessory. The aircraft shown is a Ju 88 A-1 variant.

Emblem of I./KG 30

BELOW: A hydraulically-operated trolley was available to help raise bombs up to the racks beneath the wing centre section of the Ju 88. This aircraft, from KG 30, has yellow spinner tips.



LEFT: The III.Gruppe of KG 30, which was formed on 1 January 1940 at Barth, carried the familiar black diving eagle emblem of the Geschwader, but with the shield painted yellow, outlined in white. The first III./KG 30 was redesignated Ergänzungsgruppe/KG 30 on 15 October 1940, being immediately re-formed from III./KG 4.

Strike in the West

The Invasion of France and the Low Countries – May-June 1940

'Hardly were the words "now keep a sharp look out for fighters" out of my mouth before we are attacked by a Fokker G-1 heavy fighter. Thies, my radioman, had spotted it in time. We fire away to keep the thing off and I search desperately for a protective cloud. Nothing! Our only salvation is to "dive like the devil!" I hear a voice: "Damn, my gun's jammed!" But Wilhelm Braun behind me has got his machine gun through the plexiglas above. I take a quick look round. The enemy fighter is very close indeed. I can easily see the pilot. Then everything is drowned in the clatter of our two machine guns. Thies is firing again. We dive to safety. The fighter does not follow us. A Messerschmitt 109 has got it.'

Werner Baumbach, pilot with I./KG 30
10 May 1940

On 10 January 1940, Hitler unexpectedly summoned von Brauschitsch, Raeder and Göring, respectively his army, navy and air force commanders, to the Reich Chancellery to tell them that he had decided to launch 'Contingency *Gelb*' (Yellow) - an offensive against the West in a week's time. Whatever the feasibility of this plan, it was disastrously compromised when a light aircraft crewed by two German officers crash-landed in Belgium on the same day. The officers were carrying detailed plans for the invasion which led to its immediate postponement.

It was not until Allied and German forces became involved in the fighting in Norway, that Hitler finalised a revised version of *Gelb*. The new scheme was for *Generaloberst* Wilhelm von Leeb's Army Group C to hold the Franco-German border opposite the Maginot Line while *Generaloberst* Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group A made the main attack, with most of the armour, through the Ardennes forests of southern Belgium and Luxembourg. At the same time *Generaloberst* Fedor von Bock's Army Group B was to mount a secondary advance through northern Belgium and southern Holland to draw the main British and French forces north so that Rundstedt could hit their flank. Rundstedt's ground forces were supported by *Luftflotte* 2 under Albert Kesselring while von Bock's air support was provided by *Luftflotte* 3 under Hugo Sperrle.

LEFT: Oblt. Werner Baumbach was born on 27 December 1916 and became the first bomber pilot to be awarded the Swords to his Ritterkreuz on 18 August 1942 while commanding III./KG 30. Between November 1944 and March 1945 he led the special bomber wing KG 200. After hostilities ended he emigrated to Argentina where, ironically, he was killed flying a Lancaster bomber on 20 October 1953.

The actual attack began at 03.50 hours on 10 May, with airborne troops striking at the Albert Canal bridges and at Fort Eben Emaël in Belgium. Simultaneously, operations against Holland commenced with two strikes against the Dutch airfields at Rotterdam-Waalhaven by I./KG 4 and at Amsterdam-Schipol by III./KG 4. At both, Fokker G-1 heavy fighters were scrambled to intercept the Heinkels and claimed the destruction of five of the *Luftwaffe* bombers, although several were later destroyed by the escorting Bf 109 fighters. In total the bombers of KG 4 claimed the destruction of 62 Dutch aircraft, half of them trainers at De Kooy airfield, but 11 He 111s were shot down by Dutch fighters including that of the *Kommodore* of KG 4, *Oberst* Martin Fiebig, who was injured and taken prisoner. Over Belgium almost half that country's air force was destroyed on the ground, some eleven Hurricanes being destroyed by LG 1's He 111s at Schaffen-Diest.

BELOW: 'Fall Gelb' ('Constituancy Yellow;) the plan for the German attack in the West.

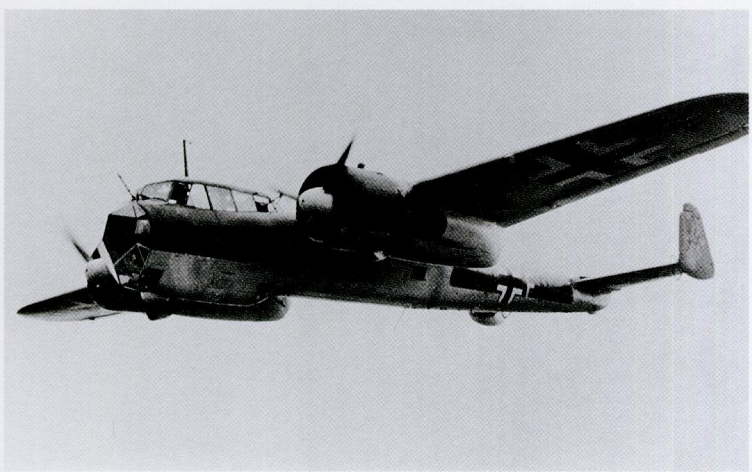
Luftwaffe bomber Order of Battle 10 May 1940

Luftflotte 2	***General der Flieger* Albert Kesselring**		**Münster**		
IV.*Fliegerkorps*		***General der Flieger* Alfred Keller**	**Düsseldorf**		
Stab(K)/LG 1	He 111 H	*Oberst* Alfred Bulowius	Düsseldorf	5	(4)
	Ju 88 A		Düsseldorf	1	(0)
I.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Eduard Teske	Düsseldorf	30	(22)
II.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Kurt Dobratz	Düsseldorf	26	(18)
	Ju 88 A		Düsseldorf	32	(4)
III.(K)*Gruppe*/LG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Dr. Ernst Bormann	Düsseldorf	12	(5)
Stab/KG 27	He 111 P	*Oberst* Hans Behrendt	Hannover-Langenhagen	5	(4)
	He 111 D		Hannover-Langenhagen	1	(1)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	*Major* Sigismund Freiherr von Falkenstein	Hannover-Langenhagen	36	(25)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	*Major* Tamm	Delmenhorst	35	(25)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 27	He 111 P	*Hptm.* Schirmer	Wunstorf	38	(32)
Stab/KG 30	He 111 H	*Oberstlt.* Walter Loebel	Oldenburg	1	(0)
	Ju 88 A		Oldenburg	2	(2)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 30	Ju 88 A	*Hptm.* Fritz Doench	Oldenburg	34	(25)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 30	Ju 88 A	*Hptm.* Kinkelbein	Oldenburg	38	(25)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 30	Ju 88 A	*Hptm.* Arved Crüger	Marx	30	(20)
VIII.*Fliegerkorps*		***Gen.Major* Wolfram von Richthofen**	**Schloss Dyck/Grevenbroich**		
Stab/KG 77	Do 17 Z	*Gen.Major* Wolf von Stutterheim	Düsseldorf	8	(6)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 Z	*Major* Balcke	Werl	35	(28)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 U	*Major* Behrendt	Düsseldorf	1	(1)
	Do 17 Z		Düsseldorf	35	(28)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 77	Do 17 Z	*Major* Max Kless	Düsseldorf	34	(21)
***Fliegerführer* zbV 2**		***Gen.Major* Richard Putzier**	**Bremen**		
Stab/KG 4	He 111 P	*Oberst* Martin Fiebig	Faßsberg	8	(7)
	He 111 D		Faßsberg	1	(0)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 H	*Ostlt.* Hans-Joachim Rath	Gütersloh	36	(24)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	*Major* Dietrich Freiherr von Massenbach	Faßberg	35	(18)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 4	He 111 P	*Major* Neudörffer ?	Delmenhorst	23	(12)
	Ju 88 A		Delmenhorst	37	(21)
Stab/KG 54	He 111 P	*Oberst* Walter Lackner	Quakenbrück	6	(4)
	He 111 D		Quakenbrück	1	(0)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 54	He 111 P	*Major* Otto Höhne	Quakenbrück	36	(33)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 54	He 111 P	*Major* Rudolf Koester	Varrelbusch	29	(26)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 54	He 111 P	*Major* Adolf Häring	Vechta	35	(27)
9.*Fliegerdivision*		***Gen.Major* Joachim Coeler**	**Jever**		
KGr 126	He 111 B and H	*Hptm.* Gerd Stein	Marx	32	(31)

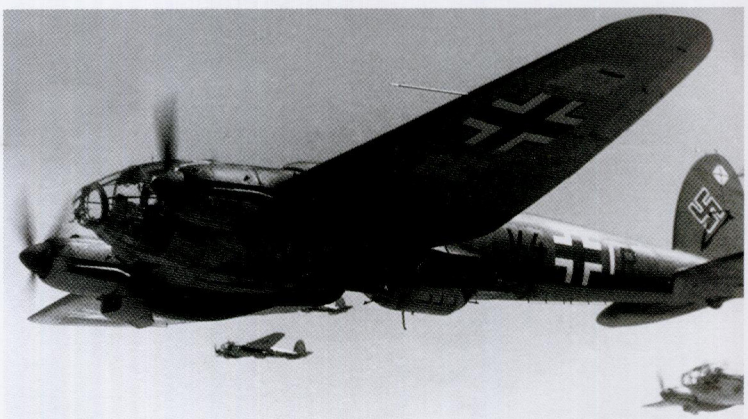
Luftflotte 3	***General der Flieger* Hugo Sperrle**		**Bad Orb**		
I.*Fliegerkorps*	***Gen.d.Fl.* Ulrich Grauert**		**Köln**		
Stab/KG 1	He 111 H	*Oberst* Ernst Exss	Giessen	5	(3)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Maier	Giessen	34	(25)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Kosch	Kirthof	35	(23)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 1	He 111 H	*Major* Otto Schnelle [1]	Ettinghausen	33	(27)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 28	He 111 P	*Major* von Hoffmann	Bracht (attached to KG 1)	36	(30)
Stab/KG 76	Do 17 U	*Oberst* Stephan Fröhlich	Nidda	1	(0)
	Do 17 Z		Nidda	4	(4)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 76	Do 17 Z	*Major* Ludwig Scholz	Köln-Ostheim & Vogelsang	36	(32)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 76	Do 17 Z	*Major* Möricke ?	Köln-Wahn & Vogelsang	34	(25)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 76	Do 17 Z	*Major* Franz Reuss	Nidda		

II.*Fliegerkorps*		***Gen.d.Fl.* Bruno Loerzer**	**Köln**		
Stab/KG 2	Do 17 U	*Oberst* Johannes Fink	Ansbach	1	(1)
	Do 17 Z		Ansbach	7	(5)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 2	Do 17 Z	*Major* Martin Gutzmann	Giebelstadt	36	(22)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 2	Do 17 Z	*Obstlt.* Paul Weitkus	Ansbach	36	(28)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 2	Do 17 Z	*Major* Werner Kreipe	Illesheim	36	(30)
Stab/KG 3	Do 17 Z	*Oberst* Wolfgang von Chamier-Glisczinski	Würzburg	6	(6)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 3	Do 17 Z	*Obstlt.* Gabelmann	Aschaffenburg	35	(31)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 3	Do 17 Z	*Hptm.* Pilger	Schweinfurt	36	(27)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 3	Do 17 Z	*Major* von Kunowski	Würzburg	35	(28)
Stab/KG 53	He 111 H	*Oberst* Erich Stahl	Roth	7	(4)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	*Obstlt.* Kurt Mehnert	Roth	36	(21)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	*Obstlt.* Kohlbach	Oedheim	36	(24)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 53	He 111 H	*Major* Willi Rohrbacher	Schwäbisch Hall	36	(26)
V.*Fliegerkorps*	***Gen.Lt.* Robert Ritter von Greim**		**Gersthofen (near Augsburg)**		
Stab/KG 51	He 111 H	*Oberst* Josef Kammhuber	Landsberg/Lech	1	(1)
	Ju 88 A		Landsberg/Lech	1	(0)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 51	He 111 H	*Major* Hans-Bruno Schulz-Heyn	Lechfeld	36	(18)
	Ju 88 A		Lechfeld	23	(7)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 51	Ju 88 A	*Major* Winkler	München-Riem	39	(29)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 51	He 111 H	*Major* Johann-Wilhelm Kind	Landsberg/Lech	39	(29)
Stab/KG 55	He 111 P	*Oberst* Alois Stöckl	Leipheim	6	(5)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 55	He 111 P	*Major* Walter Marienfeld	Neuburg am Donau	35	(25)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 55	He 111 P	*Obstlt.* Otto von Lachemair	Leipheim	36	(24)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 55	He 111 P	*Major* Hans Schemmell	Gablingen	36	(17)
Luftflotte 5	***General der Flieger* Hans Geisler**		**Oslo**		
Stab/KG 26	He 111 H	*Gen.Major* Robert Fuchs	Trondheim-Vaernes	5	(3)
I.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H	*Major* Hermann Busch	Trondheim-Vaernes	36	(34)
II.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H	*Major* Martin Vetter	Stavanger-Sola	22	(20)
III.*Gruppe*/KG 26	He 111 H	*Major* Viktor von Lossberg	Trondheim-Vaernes	36	(21)
KGr 100	He 111 H	*Hptm.* Artur von Casimir	Trondheim-Vaernes	27	13)
Not attached					
I.*Gruppe*/KG 40	Fw 200 C	*Major* Edgar Petersen	Bordeaux-Merignac	6	(2)

1 Schnelle was killed in action on this day when his He 111 crashed east of St. Quentin. His place was taken by Major Willibald Fanelsa.

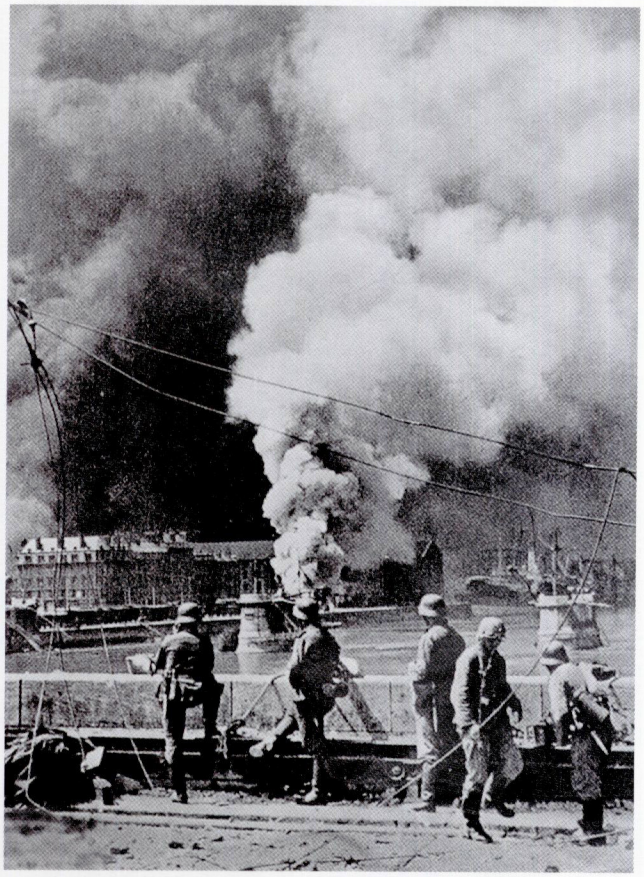


ABOVE: Four bomber Geschwader – KG 2, 3, 76 and 77 – were equipped with the Do 17 Z when Germany invaded France and the Low Countries in May 1940. All four units' aircraft carried black green and dark green uppersurfaces with pale blue beneath. The individual letter, in this case 'F', was painted in the Staffel colour and repeated below the wings outboard of the Balkenkreuz in black.



ABOVE: Three He 111 H-2s of 6./KG 1 in flight during the French campaign. The aircraft nearest the camera, V4+IP, has its individual letter 'I' painted in yellow on the fuselage and repeated, in black, below each wing, outboard of the Balkenkreuz. Beneath the same wing it is possible to see where the original two letters of the Stammkennzeichen, 'B+D', have been painted out to be replaced by the individual letter. The significance of the white diamond on the top of the fin and rudder is unknown.

May-June 1940



ABOVE: Apart from one or two buildings such as the famous 'Witte Huis' and the central post office very few buildings in the centre of Rotterdam survived its bombing by He 111s of KG 54 on 14 May 1940.

During the first day of the invasion, all *Luftwaffe* bomber units flew continuous sorties over the Low Countries and the French border area, striking at 47 airfields, 17 railway stations, 16 factories and 45 military concentrations. Operations over the Maginot Line began at 05.00 hours when a formation of Do 17s from III./KG 3 was intercepted by Hurricanes of 1 Squadron, RAF, and the aircraft piloted by *Fw.* Helmut Hoffmann of the 8.*Staffel* was shot down. In the same area, the Do 17s of II./KG 2 also clashed with RAF Hurricanes, several more Dorniers being shot down. KG 2 was later to lose eight aircraft, while the French Air Force unit, GC I/5 shot down eight Do 17s from KG 3 with its Hawk 75As. Shortly after midday, some Ju 88s from KG 51 and He 111s from KG 53 were also intercepted by RAF Hurricanes. In the same area, but later in the afternoon, a *Kette* of He 111s from 8./KG 51 led by *Lt.* Paul Seidel attempted to attack the French airfield at Dijon-Longvic, but the aircraft somehow managed to drop their bombs on the German city of Freiburg, over 200 km (120 miles) away. Dense cloud and tiredness were blamed, and the resulting death of 55 civilians plus another 81 injured was attributed to a fictitious British or French 'atrocity'.

Further north, the He 111s of II./KG 27 and III./KG 1 struck towards Lille, while aircraft from III./KG 54 were attacked by RAF fighters between Helchin and Courtrai. In the same area a large aerial battle developed between French and British fighters and III./KG 1 during the afternoon, the German *Gruppe* losing six He 111s destroyed and another damaged. These included the aircraft piloted by the *Kommandeur, Major* Otto Schnelle, who was killed.

Also during the afternoon, clashes between German bombers and Allied fighters in the Ghent-Brussels-Antwerp area resulted in the destruction of four He 111 Hs from the *Stab* and I./LG 1, two He 111 Ps from KG 27 (with a further four damaged), and another He 111 H from I./KG 1. The worst casualties were, however, suffered by 8./KG 54 which lost six He 111 Ps shot down by Hurricanes, plus a further aircraft damaged. These included the aircraft (B3+AS) piloted by the *Staffelkapitän, Hptm.* Fritz Stadelmayr who was injured, and another flown by *Oblt.* Volprecht Freiherr von Riedesel zu Eisenbach, also injured. Much later, von Riedesel was killed while leading the *Geschwader* during its first operations with the Me 262 jet fighter. Another of the pilots shot down, *Lt.* Alfred Jansen, who was taken prisoner remembered: 'Our Heinkel flew very well, but our formation was attacked and dispersed by British fighters, so it was easy for them to destroy us.' At the end of the day, the French had lost 65 aircraft destroyed, including 12 Vought dive-bombers from AB 3 at Boulogne-Alprecht and five Amiot 143s from GB II/34 at Roye-Amy but the RAF had not lost a single aircraft, mainly due to faulty German intelligence.

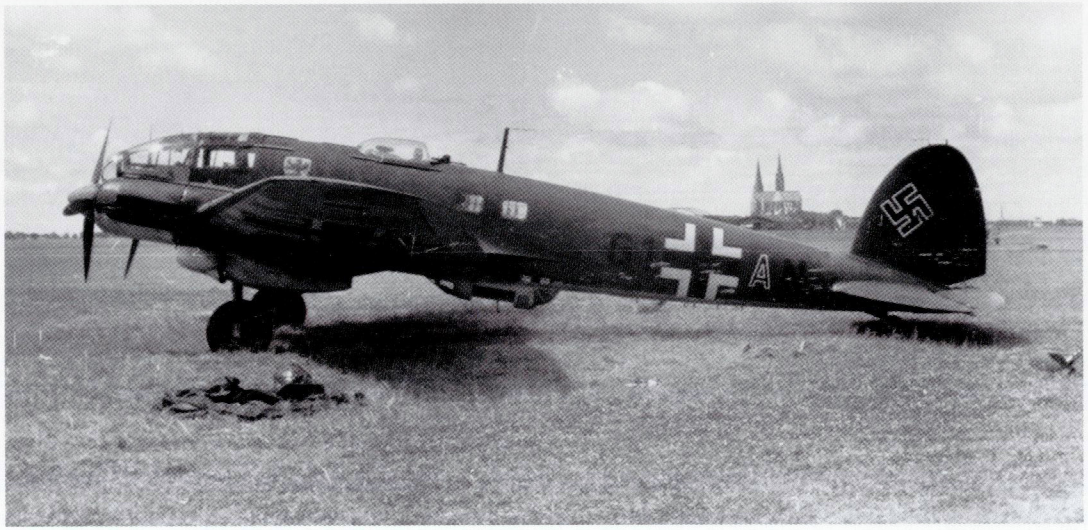
German operations were not quite as intensive on 11 May, the *Luftwaffe* attacking 23 airfields and four railway stations. In the morning for example, the Stab, 1., 2., 4., 5. and 9./KG 2 bombed airfields at Conde Vraux, Ecury-sur-Coole, Malmaison and Reims-Pommery, with 3./KG 2 attacking troops and railway targets around Montmedy. The most successful attack was carried out by 4./KG 2 which destroyed six RAF Blenheims of 114 Squadron at Conde Vraux and damaged all the others.

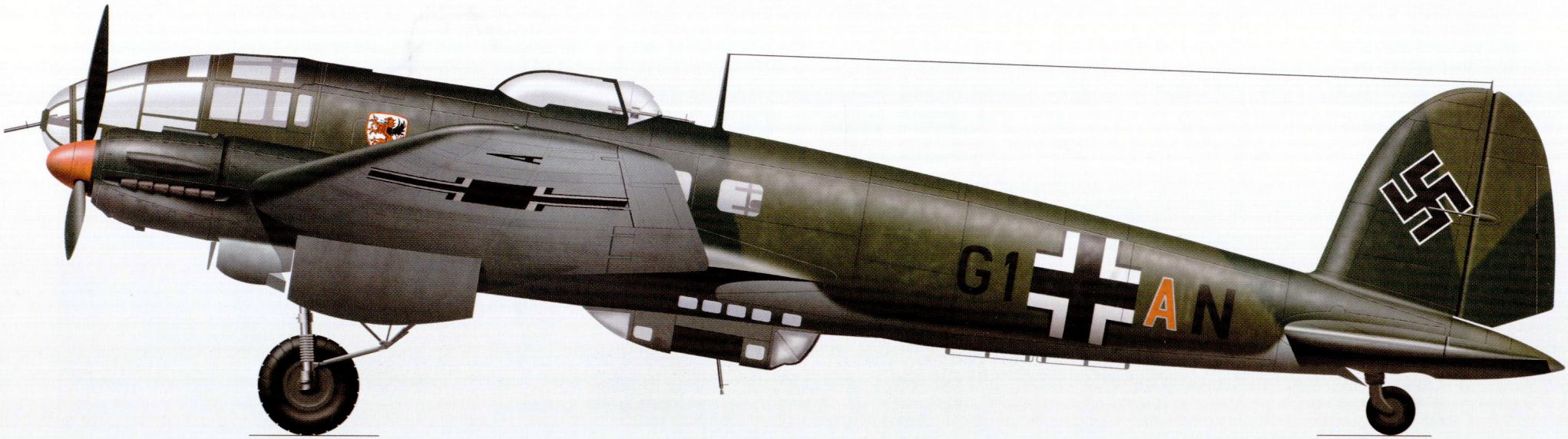
Next day, Hurricanes from 607 Squadron intercepted a *Kette* of He 111s from 4./LG 1 near Lille and shot them all down. A little later the whole of KG 53 flew a mass attack on Mourmelon airfield near Reims. East of the city, I./KG 53 was intercepted by the Hawk 75 As of GC II/5 and three Heinkels shot down. Further south the II.*Gruppe*

BELOW: Close-up photograph showing detail of the KG 55 emblem.

Emblem of KG 55

RIGHT: During the early part of the invasion of France, II./KG 55 under Obstlt. Otto von Lachemair moved from Leipheim to Schwaighofen and then to Oedheim. At this time it was equipped with the He 111 P similar to this aircraft, G1+AN, of the 5.Staffel. In this photograph the distinction between the black green and dark green uppersurfaces is clearly visible as is the red griffon badge of the Geschwader painted behind the cockpit.





Heinkel He 111 P-2 of 5./KG 55 'Greif', May 1940

For the first three days of the campaign against France, 5./KG 55 was led by Hptm. Karl von Knauer, but on 13 May 1940 he was replaced by *Hptm.* Hans-Joachim Gabriel who led the Staffel until 20 November 1942 when he was killed in action. This Heinkel displays typical camouflage of the time with the green uppersurfaces overlapping the leading edges of the wings.

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was attacked by Hurricanes of 501 Squadron and two more He 111s shot down. During the afternoon, II.*Fliegerkorps* flew operations in support of the 12.Armee, III./KG 2 bombing Allied troop movements south of Charleville, I. and II./KG 3 striking around Vouziers and I./KG 53 attacking Sedan. II./KG 3 was intercepted by the Hawk 75s of GC II/2 and GC III/7 and the Hurricanes of 501 Squadron RAF which resulted in the destruction of three Do 17s with two others damaged. A little later an He 111 from II./KG 55 was destroyed and another damaged by 501 Squadron.

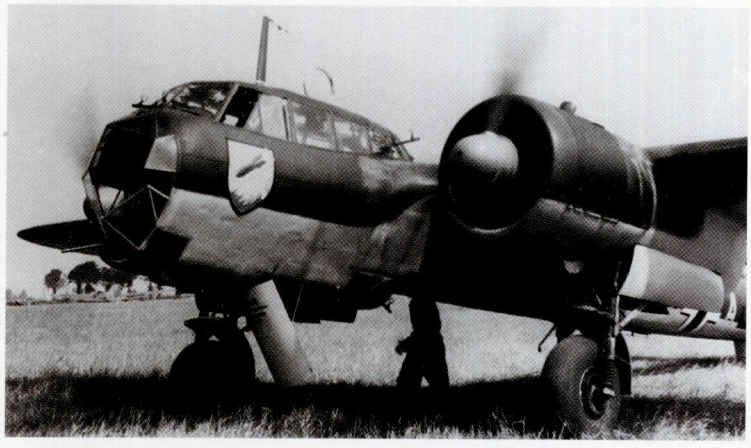
On 13 May German forces broke through the Allied lines at Sedan. In the air at around 10.00 hours the He 111s of KG 55 clashed with the MS 406s of GC I/3 and GC I/5 and the Hurricanes of 73 Squadron which shot down six and damaged four more. These included the He 111 P-2 piloted by the *Kommandeur* of II./KG 55, *Major* Otto von Lachemair. Near Lille the MS 406s of GC I/4 and the Hurricanes of 85 Squadron attacked a formation of Heinkels from II./KG 4 and shot down three. Despite these successes, a *Luftwaffe* situation report issued on this date stated that: 'enemy fighter activity is weakening.'

Next morning, a formation of He 111s from I. and III./KG 27 approaching the Louvain area was intercepted by several RAF Hurricane squadrons and three Heinkels were destroyed and another damaged. Around midday three more He 111s, this time from II./LG 1, were shot down by MS 406s from GC II/8 and Hurricanes from 79 Squadron. During the afternoon, one of the most controversial operations of the campaign was launched. At this time, *General* Rudolf Schmidt, commander of the XXXIX.*Panzer Korps* was negotiating with the Dutch authorities for the surrender of Rotterdam. All three *Gruppen* of KG 54 had been briefed to bomb the city, being warned that should the negotiations succeed, they should divert to attack British troops around Antwerp. Sadly, a recall order failed to reach KG 54 and 54 Heinkels dropped 97 tons of bombs on the city. In the following devastation 913 people were killed, 25,000 houses razed to the ground and 78,000 people rendered homeless. Following this catastrophe, to which was added the threat of a similar attack on Utrecht, the Dutch Army was forced to capitulate despite having combated the invaders with enormous courage. Even so, the Dutch Queen Wilhelmina escaped to Britain from where she continued the fight, bringing with her most of her navy and the resources of her colonies.

As German troops continued their breakthrough on the 15th, they swept aside uncoordinated attacks by French armour. The *Luftwaffe* launched its biggest series of bombing raids since the 11 May on this day, hitting 16 airfields, 22 rail targets and six factories. The RAF brought in more reinforcements, but they largely failed to prevent more attacks on Allied forces and by 18 May the German breakthrough had reached a line between Cambrai and St. Quentin. Local successes in the air were attained however. In the early afternoon, Hurricanes of 111 and 253 Squadrons intercepted a formation of Do 17s from 4./KG 76 with Bf 110 fighter escort, shooting one down and damaging two others. A little later, three He 111s from II./KG 1 were shot down by three Hurricane squadrons south of Vitry, but the greatest German loss was recorded by I. and II./KG 4, which lost three Heinkels shot down and another damaged.

By 19 May the Germans had reached Peronne and now there was nothing between them and the coast. Next day the first Panzers burst through between Arras and the River Somme and reached the sea, cutting off a large number of Allied troops in western Belgium and north-western France. Bomber units continued attacking rail targets and troop concentrations on this day, an example of which was described by Lt. *Bräck* of KG 51:

'We took off again at 17.00 hours for the railway junction south of Compiègne. I was flying on the left of the leading *Kette* in the *Gruppe*. As we neared our target, the French flak got our range. Then two French MS 406s burst out of the cloud and fired at us. The whistled past only 10 metres below. "What a cheek!" yelled my observer as he loosed off a machine gun burst. We then began our bombing run. As the observer was guiding me in I looked down and noticed a tracer round coming directly at our nose. Instinctively I wrenched the rudder hard over to port. Two sharp blows shook our Heinkel. "That was meant for us" said Sepp dryly. Just as we were about to drop our bombs there was another blow to the aircraft and a hideous rattle – heavy flak bursting right beside us! After dropping our bombs our formation swung away to port. Then the engines began an uneven whining noise



BELOW:
A Do 17 Z, possibly of 3./KG 76, revs its engines prior to taking off for a mission. It is possible that the unit code is 'F1+AL'. The individual letter 'A' in yellow and the emblem depicts a bomb over a mountain top.

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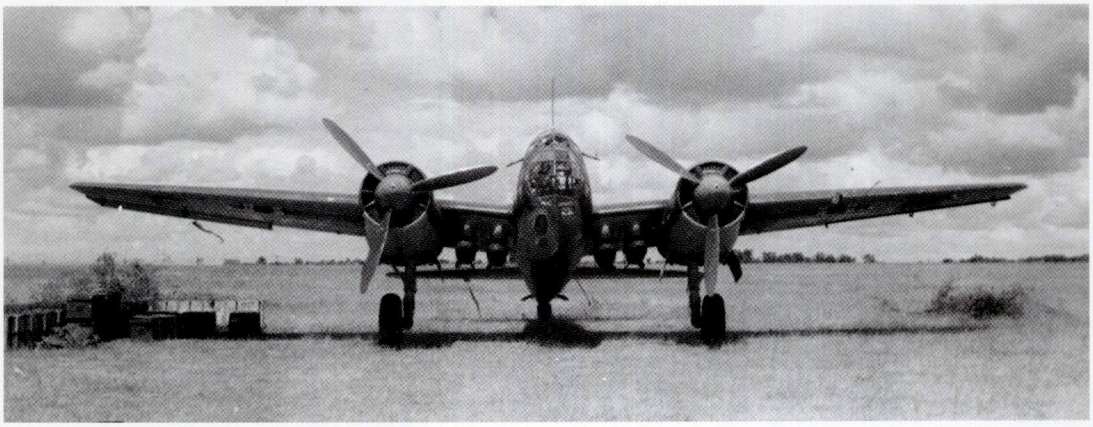
ABOVE: This He 111 carries the emblem of 4./KG 1 on its nose below the cockpit. It comprised a black and white bull snorting red lightning and riding a silver bomb, all on a white shield. Just behind this emblem was often carried a white-edged yellow triangle with the legend '87' in black indicating the octane rating of the fuel to be used.



ABOVE: The Ju 88 A-1 had a considerably shorter wing span than the later production models, this feature considerably improving the 'wonder bomber's' handling characteristics. This A-1 carries four 550 lb SC 250 bombs beneath its external racks.

ABOVE: Ground crew pose on a Do 17 Z of II./KG 3 during 1940. This aircraft carries the standard 70/71/65 camouflage scheme with the singing bird emblem of the Gruppe painted on the fuselage nose in black on a white circle. The Staffel insignia of a pink devil riding a white bomb is painted on the outboard part of the engine cowling.

that froze the blood in my veins – engines damaged – force landing – in the bag! I tried to bring the engines into synchronisation by playing with the throttles but no such luck. "The bombs were spot on, sir," called Sepp, "but we're losing all our oil!" A glance at my starboard wing told me why. I wondered why the wing was still there because there was a hole in it about a metre long by half a metre wide.'

After much juggling with the engines, Bräck managed to bring his damaged Heinkel back to base and make an emergency landing. When the crew surveyed the damage, they found that the wing had received two 40 mm shell hits which had shattered the main spar and ripped two square metres of skin off the underside.

By 20 May the *Luftwaffe* had lost 547 aircraft destroyed, 20 per cent of its total strength when the campaign began. In addition, the rapid German advance had begun to cause a problem which had not been foreseen. Many *Luftwaffe* units were force to crowd together on advanced airfields and this was to result in a high accident rate. In addition, it took some time for the supply organisation to catch up, with the result that the units often had to scrounge fuel and supplies. Yet another problem was that, as German forces reached the coast, they came within range of RAF fighters, including the redoubtable Spitfire, which were operating from bases in England. During the period from 21 to 25 May, the *Luftwaffe* suffered 25 per cent of the total losses experienced during the whole campaign.

Despite these problems, Amiens fell on 21 May and, despite a spirited counter-attack by British and French armoured units at Arras, its eventual failure sealed the fate of the Allied armies in the north. The encircled Allied forces had begun to make for the Channel port of Dunkirk which had already suffered three *Gruppe*-sized raids since the 16th. Göring immediately saw 'a wonderful opportunity' for his Luftwaffe to smash any attempted evacuation, and begged Hitler to allow him to undertake such an operation. The *Führer* was convinced, and ordered von Kleist's advance to halt on 24 May. Despite

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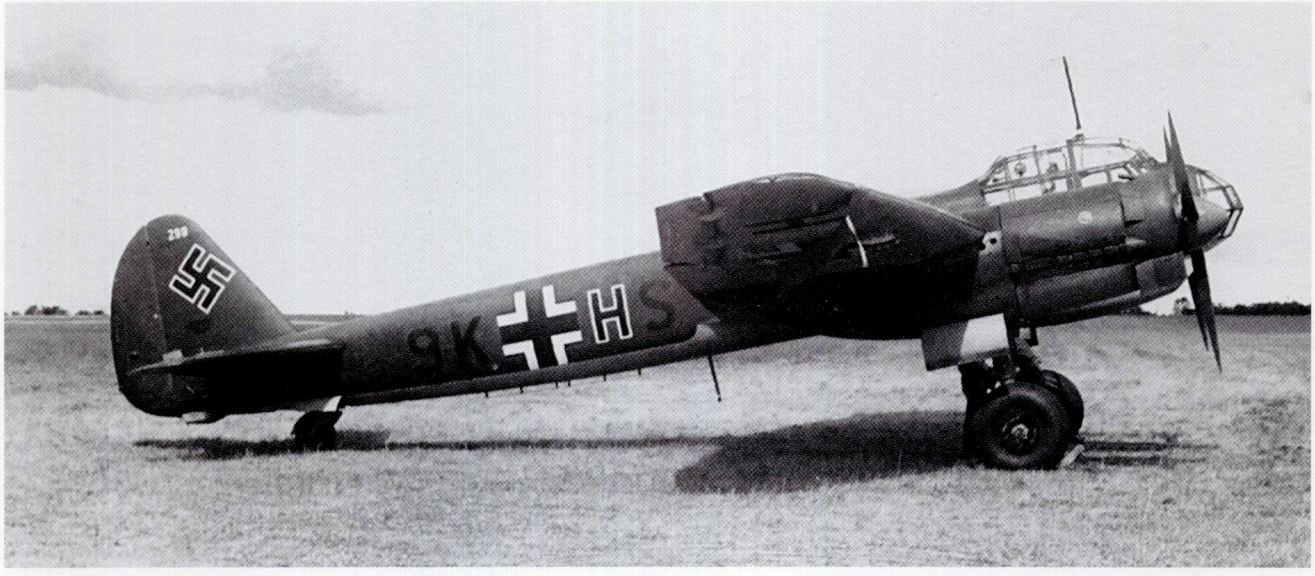
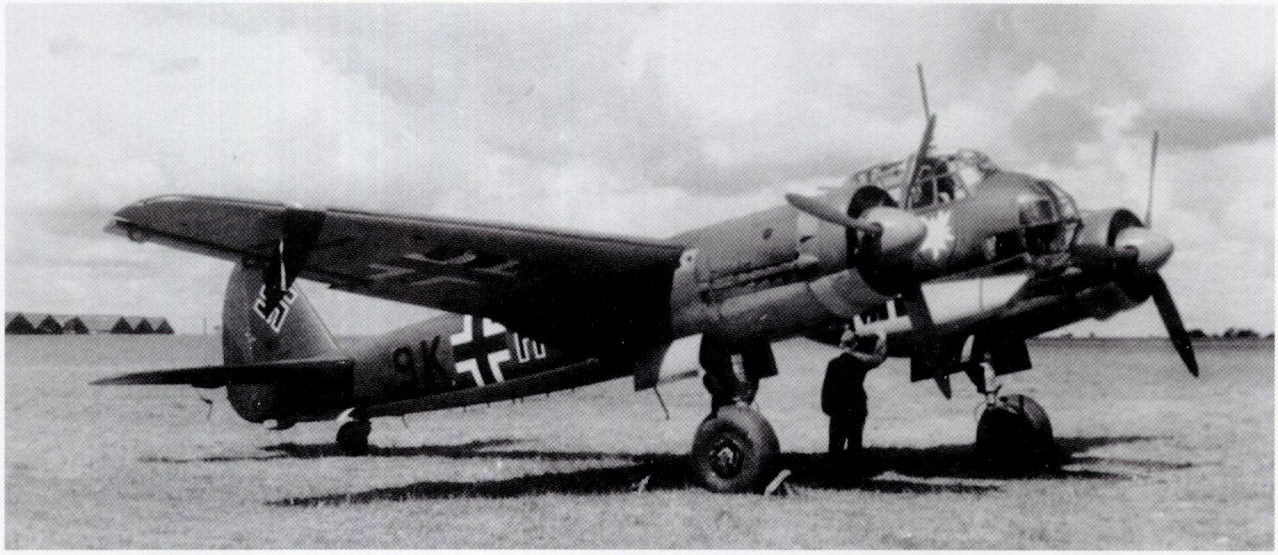
Göring's enthusiasm, others were not convinced, Kesselring protesting that many of his *Gruppen* were down to 15 serviceable aircraft, and that a large number were still operating from bases inside Germany.

The actual campaign to prevent 'Operation Dynamo', the British name for the evacuation of Dunkirk, began on 27 May when bombers from I., II. IV. and VIII.*Fliegerkorps* carried out their first raids. The morning began with attacks on the harbour by KG 1 and KG 4, followed by KG 54 which started new fires and also sank the 8,000 ton French freighter *Aden*. After this a dive-bomber raid followed and then the Do 17s of KG 2 and KG 3 swept in to the attack. These last two units did not have it all their own way. Twelve Do 17s from III./KG 3 which had just hit several oil storage tanks in the harbour were suddenly 'bounced' by Spitfires and half the formation shot down. III./KG 2 suffered a similar fate, its *Kommandeur*, *Major* Werner Kreipe, reporting: 'The enemy fighters pounced on our tightly knit formation with the fury of maniacs.' At the end of the day the day the *Kampfflieger* had flown 225 sorties, losing 24 bombers, but Dunkirk's inner harbour had been wrecked, forcing the Allies to use the more limited resources of the outer harbour and the surrounding beaches.

Fortunately for the Allies, the weather worsened on 28 May and heavy rain on the 29th prevented the *Luftwaffe* from flying. Von Richthofen was to record in his diary: 'All levels of higher command were demanding that VIII.*Fliegerkorps* go again for the ships and boats on which the English divisions were getting away. We had, however, a ceiling of just 100 metres and, as general in command, I expressed the view that the enemy's concentrated flak was causing greater losses to our side than we were to his.' After the cloud began to break up during the afternoon some operations were carried out by the Ju 88s of KG 30 and He 111s of LG 1, three Royal Navy destroyers being sunk.

Next day fog and rain prevented further *Luftwaffe* action but the weather improved on the last day of the month enabling German bombers to fly 195 sorties and sink four more destroyers and ten other

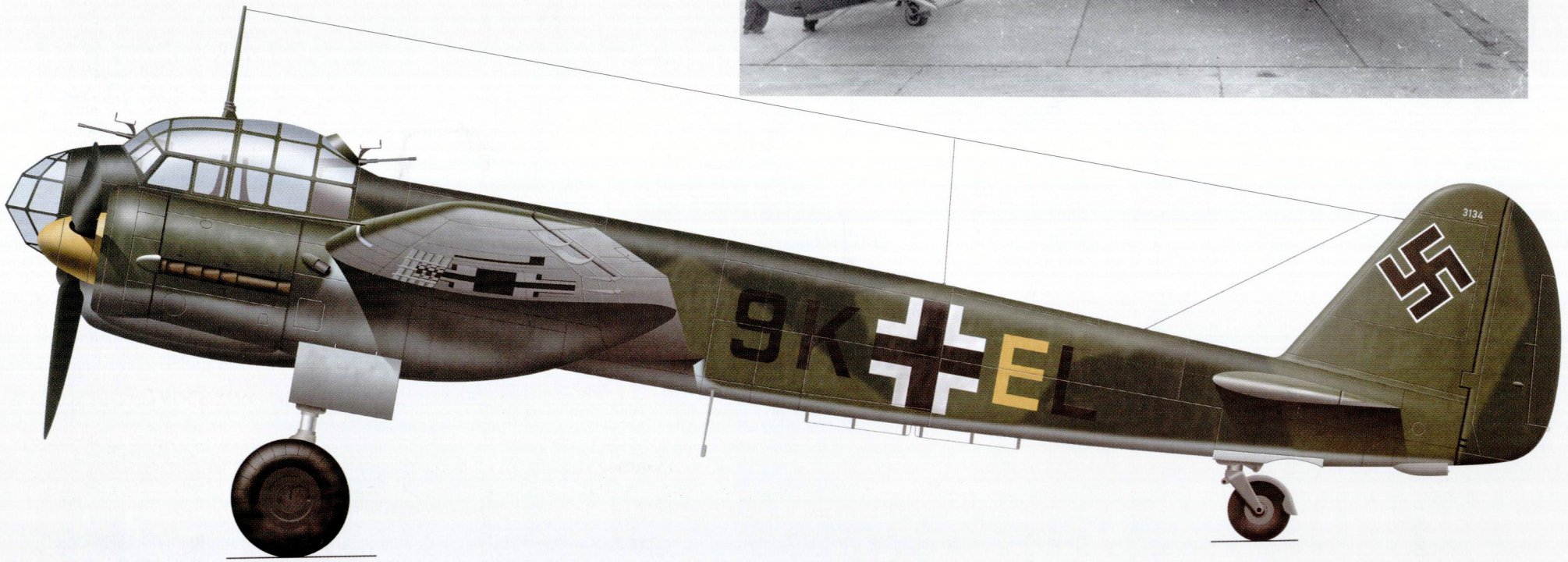




ABOVE AND RIGHT: III./KG 51 began converting to the Ju 88 A-1 just after the completion of the campaign against France and the Low Countries. At this time the unit was still at Landsberg/Lech, moving to Étampes-Montdésir on 20 June 1940. This aircraft, has its individual letter 'H' in red outlined in white with its Werknummer 299 painted in white at the tip of the tailfin.

Emblem of KG 51

RIGHT: The Ju 88 A-1 could easily be distinguished from later models of the Junkers bomber by its much stubbier wings which spanned 18.37 m (60 ft 3 ins) as against 20.08 m (65 ft 10 ins) of most later production variants. This aircraft has just been delivered to I./KG 51 which converted from the He 111 between 9 April and 10 May 1940 at Memmingen in southern Germany.



Junkers Ju 88 A-1 of 3./KG 51 '*Edelweiss*', May 1940

This aircraft carried standard *Luftwaffe* camouflage of the period with its unit code, 9K+EL, painted on both sides of the fuselage in black with the individual letter 'E' in yellow. The *Werknummer* 3134 was painted in white at the top of the fin above the *Hakenkreuz*.

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ships. A further 160 sorties were flown on 1 June and next day a massive aerial battle developed over Dunkirk and far beyond. The RAF put up regular patrols of Hurricanes, Spitfires and even Defiants and Blenheims, but these were often driven off by the Bf 109 and Bf 110 fighter escort. In one particular operation six He 111s from KG 54 were shot down including that with the *Kapitän* of the 4.*Staffel*, *Hptm.* Lothar Maiwald, on board. Dunkirk finally fell to German troops on 4 June but by that time 338,226 troops had escaped to Britain. As Erhard Milch who visited the port next day was to tell Göring: 'British Army? I saw perhaps 20 or 30 corpses. The rest has got clean away."

The absence of British forces now permitted German troops to concentrate on a final offensive against France. This had been planned as early as 20 May under the code-name 'Contingency *Rot*' (Red) and was to take place in two stages. Firstly, Army Group B under *General* von Bock would advance to the Seine, whilst *Panzergruppe* Kleist, on Bock's left flank, would isolate Paris. Then four days later, Rundstedt's Army Group A was to follow, striking southwards from the Aisne towards Reims. At the head of this attack, *Panzergruppe* Guderian would smash through the French centre, then outflank the right. The initial German air objective was the neutralisation of French fighter airfields and installations as well as aircraft factories and transportation targets around Paris ahead of the main ground thrust against the 46 French divisions holding the Weygand line.

As with the army, the *Luftwaffe* assault was to take place in two stages. The first, beginning on 1 June, was to be carried out in the Rhône valley and around Marseilles with the idea of preventing the French from bringing seasoned troop reinforcements from North Africa. For this operation, one of the most dangerous of the campaign, *Luftflotte* 3 assembled the He 111s of KG 53 and KG 55. Apart from involving a round trip of some 1,300 km (800 miles), near to the Heinkel's effective operational range, the aircraft also had to evade heavy French defences along the Rhône Valley. The first operation against Marseilles resulted in some bombs and propaganda leaflets being dropped and the cutting of the rail network in seven places. Next day's attack resulted in the destruction of 15 French aircraft, but six Heinkels were lost, some to the fighters of the Swiss Air Force after they had strayed over that country's territory. Sporadic operations continued until 8 June, but two days later Italy declared war on France and further operations in the Rhône valley were left to Mussolini's air force.

The second stage of the attack was code-named 'Operation *Paula'* and was intended to destroy French airfields and factories around Paris. It commenced on the early afternoon of 3 June, when 640 bombers drawn from KG 1, KG 2, KG 3, KG 4, KG 30, KG 54, KG 76 and LG 1 attacked over 50 targets in three waves. The *Luftwaffe* was very pleased with the results, KG 2 for example, claiming 23 aircraft destroyed on the ground. In fact only six out of the 16 airfields attacked were severely damaged and none of the factories targeted was out of action for longer than 24 hours. Only four German bombers were shot down, however, but these did include that with the *Kommodore* of KG 51, *Oberst* Josef Kammhuber, on board. Kammhuber was taken prisoner but was released following the French capitulation and later led the *Luftwaffe's* night fighter force.

'Contingency *Rot*' was launched two days later, the *Luftwaffe* quickly establishing air superiority, although KG 27 lost five He 111s and KG 51 four. By 9 June a total of 19 airfields had been attacked, with 87 aircraft destroyed on the ground. The same day, von Rundstedt's *Heeresgruppe* A launched a crushing attack against the French Fourth Army holding the Aisne between Neufchâtel and Attigny. The attack was supported by the bombers of the II.*Fliegerkorps* escorted by Bf 109s and Bf 110s. Seven French infantry divisions faced twice their number of German units, but despite this the French fought bravely. Eventually, however, the Germans crossed the Aisne, reaching the Marne and then the town of Romilly.

Night attacks on French ports began on 9/10 June, one particularly successful operation being carried out by III./LG 1 and III./KG 1 against Bordeaux ten days later. Meanwhile, at 06.30 hours on 14 June, German military vehicles drove into the centre of Paris and a little later a giant swastika flag was hung from the Arc de Triomphe. Soon afterwards, German bomber units began to occupy airfields in and around the city, but now their operations were largely confined to support of the Army. Fighting continued until 21 June when Hitler and Göring presented France with armistice terms in the same railway carriage which the Allies had used in November 1918. The peace terms were finally signed on 25 June, and now Germany looked towards her last adversary in the west, the United Kingdom.

Between 3 September 1939 and 25 June 1940, the French Air Forces and anti-aircraft units had claimed the destruction of 1,009 German and Italian aircraft, the French Air Force claiming that in 20,410 sorties, it had destroyed 935 of these, a figure which includes 461 bombers. German records actually indicate the loss of 1,428 aircraft in the same period (roughly 28 per cent of the *Luftwaffe's* initial strength), but this includes those lost to the RAF and 60 to the Dutch and 20 to the Belgian air forces.